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ABSTRACT

This monograph reviews research on the influence of family life on juvenile delinquency and adult crime. Families are strong socializing forces. Parents teach children to control their behavior and respect others' rights; however, parents can also teach aggressive, antisocial, and violent behavior. Research shows that children with parents who are negatively involved or uninvolved in their lives are at a greater risk of becoming delinquents. Marital discord, conflict, and child abuse correlate with delinquency. Single-parent families produce more delinquent children than two-parent families. Although most juvenile delinquents do not commit crimes as adults, the important association between family life and criminal activity continues for adults. Being married does not necessarily reduce the likelihood of adult criminal offense; however, some research shows that the ability to sustain a marriage predicts abstinence from crime, suggesting that the quality, not the existence, of a marriage may have an influence. Other studies indicate that maintaining family ties while incarcerated and establishing good family situations upon release were associated with positive reentry into the community, and a reduction in recidivism. Family therapy is a widely advocated treatment for offenders. Surprisingly, this type of therapy has received little empirical assessment. Contains over 200 references. (CC)

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U.S. Department of Justice
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ED 376 388

OJJDP Summary

Family Life, Delinquency, and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide

Research Summary

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Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) was established by the President and Congress through the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974, Public Law 93–415, as amended. Located within the Office of Justice Programs of the U.S. Department of Justice, OJJDP's goal is to provide National leadership in addressing the issues of juvenile delinquency and improving juvenile justice.

OJJDP sponsors a broad array of research, program, and training initiatives to improve the juvenile justice system as a whole, as well as to benefit individual youth-serving agencies. These initiatives are carried out by seven components within OJJDP, described below.

Research and Program Development Division develops knowledge on national trends in juvenile delinquency; supports a program for data collection and information sharing that incorporates elements of statistical and systems development; identifies how delinquency develops and the best methods for its prevention, intervention, and treatment; and analyzes practices and trends in the juvenile justice system.

Training and Technical Assistance Division provides juvenile justice training and technical assistance to Federal, State, and local governments; law enforcement, judiciary, and corrections personnel; and private agencies, educational institutions, and community organizations.

Special Emphasis Division provides discretionary funds to public and private agencies, organizations, and individuals to replicate tested approaches to delinquency prevention, treatment, and control in such pertinent areas as chronic juvenile offenders, community-based sanctions, and the disproportionate representation of minorities in the juvenile justice system.

State Relations and Assistance Division supports collaborative efforts by States to carry out the mandates of the JJDP Act by providing formula grant funds to States; furnishing technical assistance to States, local governments, and private agencies; and monitoring State compliance with the JJDP Act.

Information Dissemination and Planning Unit informs individuals and organizations of OJJDP initiatives; disseminates information on juvenile justice, delinquency prevention, and missing children; and coordinates program planning efforts within OJJDP. The unit's activities include publishing research and statistical reports, bulletins, and other documents, as well as overseeing the operations of the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse.

Concentration of Federal Efforts Program promotes interagency cooperation and coordination among Federal agencies with responsibilities in the area of juvenile justice. The program primarily carries out this responsibility through the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, an independent body within the executive branch that was established by Congress through the JJDP Act.

Missing and Exploited Children Program seeks to promote effective policies and procedures for addressing the problem of missing and exploited children. Established by the Missing Children's Assistance Act of 1984, the program provides funds for a variety of activities to support and coordinate a network of resources such as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children; training and technical assistance to a network of 43 State clearinghouses, nonprofit organizations, law enforcement personnel, and attorneys; and research and demonstration programs.

OJJDP provides leadership, direction, and resources to the juvenile justice community to help prevent and control delinquency throughout the country.

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Family Life, Delinquency, and Crime: A Policymaker's Guide

Research Summary

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The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance, the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

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Foreword

The family is the foundation of human society. Accordingly, strengthening families is basic to the mission of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention—helping develop young people capable of leading constructive, productive lives.

This report advances our understanding of the significant effects of family life on delinquency and crime. It describes how positive parental involvement deters delinquent behavior, while its absence—or worse, its negative counterpart—fosters misconduct. As the report reminds us, "Children who are rejected by their parents, who grow up in homes with considerable conflict, or who are inadequately supervised are at greatest risk of becoming delinquent."

The researchers conclude that children raised in supportive, affectionate, and accepting homes are less likely to become deviant. OJJDP is committed to nurturing and supporting such families, not only in the interest of preventing delinquency, but also for the sake of our children.

John J. Wilson
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Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Table of Contents

Foreword iii

Overview vii

Introduction 1

Continuity and change 3

Juvenile delinquency 5
- Single-parent families 7
- Marital discord 12
- Child abuse 14
- Family effect 17
- Interaction 20
- Parental criminality 23
- Positive parenting 24
  - Supervision 25
  - Normative development 28
- Cumulative effects 30
- Conclusions 32

Adult crime 34
- Family disruption and community crime rates 34
- Marriage and family 37
- Convicted criminals and their families 41
  - Risk assessment 41
  - Prisoners and their families 42
  - Postrelease adjustment 43
- Conclusions 45

References 47

Overview

Families are one of the strongest socializing forces in life. They teach children to control unacceptable behavior, to delay gratification, and to respect the rights of others. Conversely, families can teach children aggressive, antisocial, and violent behavior. In the lives of adults, family responsibilities may serve as an important stabilizing force.

This monograph reviews the research literature that explores the development of delinquent and criminal tendencies. It is written for policymakers, administrators, and agency personnel who may have considerable practical experience in crime control and delinquency prevention and treatment, but who may not have an extensive background in research methodology.

It is divided into two principal sections. The first examines how negative parental involvement or parental noninvolvement with children may lead to juvenile delinquency. The second discusses how family life involvement by an adult at high risk for criminal activities may inhibit the likelihood of those criminal activities.

The report begins by examining the more general issue of continuity. Can events early in a person's life lead to subsequent behavior later in life? Three conclusions about the continuity of offense patterns across the life course are drawn. First, the research demonstrates that behavioral problems during childhood predict subsequent delinquency and criminality. Some of these behavior problems appear to stem from various forms of parental/family involvement. Second, although behavior problems in childhood appear to predict delinquency, most juvenile offenders subsequently refrain from such behavior. Third, the road to criminality is complex and includes multiple pathways.

Juvenile delinquency

Having established that events early in a person's life may be related to subsequent behavior, the report considers the role of early experiences with parents and family on future delinquent and criminal behavior. Children who are rejected by their parents, who grow up in homes with considerable conflict, or who are inadequately supervised are at greatest risk of becoming delinquents. There appears to be a cumulative effect in these negative family attributes. Not all children follow the same path to delinquency; different combinations of life experiences may produce delinquent behavior. Positive parenting practices during the early years and later in adolescence appear to act as buffers preventing delinquent behavior and assisting adolescents involved in such behavior to desist from delinquency.

Research confirms that children raised in supportive, affectionate, and accepting homes are less likely to become deviant. Children rejected by their parents are among the most likely to become delinquent. Studies also indicate that the

child's disposition plays a role in this causal chain. A troublesome child or adolescent is more likely to be rejected by parents, creating an escalating cycle that may lead to delinquency.

Marital discord and conflict as well as child abuse correlate with delinquency. Not all children who grow up in conflictive or violent homes become delinquent; however, exposure to conflict and violence appears to increase the risk of delinquency. At this point, researchers have not determined why negative factors propel some at-risk youth into delinquency but not others.

A child with criminal parents faces a greater likelihood of becoming a delinquent than children with law-abiding parents. However, the influence appears not to be directly related to the parents' criminality but rather to poor supervision.

Studies indicate that positive parenting, including normative development, monitoring, and discipline, clearly affects whether children will become delinquent. Adequate supervision of free-time activities, whereabouts, and peers are critical to ensure that children do not drift into antisocial and delinquent patterns of behavior. However, little is known about normative and moral development within the family as they relate to delinquency.

Single-parent families, and in particular mother-only families, produce more delinquent children than two-parent families. Research indicates that parenting practices account for most, but not all, of the difference between the two groups. Economic differences and social isolation apparently contribute to the effect.

Adult crime

Some criminologists claim that persons involved in crime have low self-control and a tendency to pursue short-term, immediate pleasures. These characteristics, which are formed early in life, are inconsistent with conditions necessary to establish and maintain family relationships. Other criminologists argue that social bonds to adult institutions such as the family help support informal social control, which can reduce the likelihood of criminal behavior in adulthood.

One group of studies, rather than examining individual likelihood of criminal behavior in relation to family situation, looks at the overall impact of the female-headed households within the community on that community's crime rate. The studies are based on the premise that neighborhoods with a larger proportion of female-headed households not only have greater numbers of unsupervised adolescents but are also less able to maintain surveillance and protection of homes, children, and the community.

Research findings indicate that rates of delinquency and crime correlate with the proportion of mother-only families with dependent children in a community. While there is little disagreement about this finding, there is considerable controversy about how to interpret it.

A second group of studies examines whether being married or being a parent reduces the likelihood of criminal offense. Cross-sectional studies find little or

no association between marital status and criminality among previous offenders or more general populations. Similarly, longitudinal studies also fail to establish a relationship between marital status and criminality. However, research indicates that criminal men tend to marry criminal women, which may nullify the possible positive effect of marriage. Furthermore, convicted adults divorce more frequently than other adults, which may suggest that marriage does not intervene in a criminal lifestyle; however, the ability to maintain a marriage predicts abstinence from crime. One set of longitudinal findings shows that attachment to a spouse is negatively related to criminal behavior, which may suggest that the quality, not the existence, of a marriage may influence criminality.

A final set of studies explores whether prisoners' family ties assist them in adjusting to prison and later to a successful return to the community. Findings generally indicate that marital status is unrelated to adult criminal deterrence, but maintaining family ties while incarcerated and establishing a positive family situation upon release were associated with successful reentry and a reduction in recidivism. Family therapy is a widely advocated and frequently used treatment for offenders but, surprisingly, has received little empirical assessment.

Introduction

During the first years of the United States' independence from Great Britain, the new republic's citizens felt optimistic and confident that they understood both the cause of and cure for criminality. They saw colonial criminal codes as contributing to criminal behavior and believed that changing those laws to express a more humane, simple, and certain consequence would solve the problem of crime in the new America. The citizens of this new and free country deeply believed that the brutal, extreme punishments meted out under British rule encouraged novice law-breakers to commit further acts in hopes of covering or mitigating, in some way, the initial act. Various writers speculated that the severity of the punishments imposed by the British did not deter the initial act, but instead caused criminals to escalate their deviant behavior to avoid a severe punishment for a minor violation. The new American citizens declared that punishments would be more humane and less brutal, but certain and fitting to the crime. They proceeded under this premise until, by the 1820's, it had become obvious that the less brutal punishments (including imprisonment) did not reduce or, as they had expected, eliminate crime in their new Nation (Rothman, 1990:57–62).

As children, some inmates imitated corrupt parental behavior.

During this pre-Civil War period, philanthropists and legislators alike began to reexamine the origins of deviant behavior (Rothman, 1990:62). One example of their attempts to understand crime and criminals is recorded in interviews conducted in 1829 and 1830 at New York State's Auburn Penitentiary. These biographical sketches offer a glimpse at one of our earliest attempts to link family relations with delinquency and crime (p. 64).

In these brief reports on individual inmates, the interviewers concentrated largely on childhood and upbringing. Loss of family control was indicated as the cause of deviance in two-thirds of the biographies. This loss stemmed from three factors. First, as children, some of these inmates imitated corrupt parental behavior. A second scenario presented in the biographies involved a breakdown or disintegration of family control caused by death, divorce, or desertion, which, it was determined, resulted in undisciplined children. And, finally, in the third case, through no apparent fault of the parents, the child left the family and home. (Gordon, 1988, in her book *Heroes of Their Own Lives*, took exception to Rothman's last reason, noting that girls often left the family because of sexual abuse, which was considered inappropriate for reporting at this time in history.) The implication of these findings to the investigators was clear: deviance began at home. Undisciplined children, ill-prepared to avoid temptation in the world, descended into lives of crime (Rothman, 1990:66).

Since then, practitioners, policymakers, and researchers have attempted to learn more about the role families play in the delinquent or criminal behavior of their offspring. Experts have developed a multitude of theoretical models and analyses linking family structure and relations to subsequent delinquency and later criminality. Criminologists suggest that a child who grows up in a dysfunctional family may learn aggressive or antisocial behavior; may not be taught to control unacceptable behavior, delay gratification, or respect the rights of others; or may not be adequately supervised to preclude association with antisocial or

Being married and having children provide a social investment in conformity.

delinquent peers. As a consequence, they say, the child becomes inadequately socialized and unable to constrain his or her behavior within acceptable boundaries.

For adults, having a job, being married and having children, and holding other ties within a community provide a social investment in conformity and can act as informal controls on their behavior. Accepting the role of husband and father or wife and mother simply appears incompatible with maintenance of a criminal lifestyle. Following this logic, it would seem that criminal and delinquent behavior may result when ties to conventional roles are weak or broken.

In the 160 years or so since the Auburn studies, research into these areas has become more sophisticated, contributing considerably to the understanding of the etiology of crime and delinquency. The literature reveals an impressive consistency in findings about the relationship between family life and delinquency and crime. The relationship is consistent in cross-sectional studies (where researchers examine family status and criminality at one point in time) and longitudinal studies (where researchers track a group of individuals with different family histories across the life course). The relationship has been replicated by studies using different designs, different populations, and different methods of measurement. The relationship between family and criminality holds whether crime and delinquency are measured via self-report data or official statistics (Snyder and Patterson, 1987:233).

The consistency of the findings tempts one to conclude that the relationship exists and little more needs to be explored. However, it is quite another matter to establish causality, that is, to show that family variables directly cause crime and delinquency. For example, when researchers observe an association between family conflict and delinquency, any one of three explanations may describe the actual relationship between the variables. Family conflict may, in fact, actually cause delinquency. Alternatively, having a delinquent child may create considerable conflict within the family. Or, perhaps family conflict and delinquency are unrelated, but increase or decrease in relation to one another because of their mutual relationship with yet a third variable, for instance, aggression proneness among family members. Researchers never prove causality but endeavor to eliminate alternative explanations by using more complex models and methods that allow them to rule out other possibilities.

This review is written specifically for policymakers and practitioners. It attempts to synthesize current knowledge about the relationship of family life to crime and delinquency. In general, the monograph does not contain highly technical terms or complex design and statistical discussions but, in some cases, when methodological issues have substantive significance, these subjects are discussed.

As the reader will discover, the actual findings regarding a particular topic are never completely consistent nor of the same magnitude. Disparities in results can often be attributed to how concepts are defined, the type and quality of measurement, the controls introduced, sample differences, and design. Rather than discussing these methodological and statistical issues, the reviewers have

been as thorough as possible in including studies while being selective in the results relied upon in drawing conclusions about the relationship of family life to crime and delinquency. In doing so, the purpose was to make the research literature as accessible as possible to policymakers and practitioners. Each section closes with a summary that presents judgments regarding the strength of the relationship between the particular family attribute and delinquency or crime.

This report comprises two major sections. One covers the literature examining the relationship of the home life of children to their subsequent delinquent and criminal behavior. The second explores the relationship of adult family relations to the prevention of criminality. Although the research literature connected with the first area is rich and extensive, there are far fewer studies examining the second topic, and these are considerably less developed.

Before delving into these primary topics, the monograph discusses the concepts of continuity and change as applied to criminal behavior. The issue of continuity raises the question of whether events earlier in a person's life can lead to subsequent behavior later in life. Specifically, do early life experiences in the family create a trajectory, or pathway, that spans the life course? And, secondly, do transitions occur in the life course—falling in love, getting married, having children—that can alter long-term patterns in an individual's life? The answers to these questions may indicate whether research about the family's role in determining delinquency and criminality has meaning in real life.

Continuity and change

Continuity implies long-term behavioral patterns. For continuity to exist from a research perspective, two conditions must be met. First, researchers must be able to show the existence of a group of variables (characteristics and circumstances), possibly including family attributes, that predict delinquent and criminal behaviors. Second, for continuity to exist, any differences among people's likelihood to commit criminal offenses must persist over time.

The possibility of continuity (or stability) in criminal behavior is important in relation to policy development. If people commit only one or a few offenses and do not persist, intervention may be unnecessary and not cost-effective. Conversely, if offense patterns persist over the life course, policymakers and practitioners may wish to provide juvenile intervention strategies to prevent further offenses (Farrington, Ohlin, and Wilson, 1986:47). For policymakers, then, the issue of continuity is important when considering the necessity and cost-effectiveness of intervention.

The findings of several researchers speak to the issue of continuity in a manner helpful to policymakers. Based on a longitudinal study, Farrington (1986) concluded the following in an article suitably titled "Stepping Stones to Adult Criminal Careers":

> It seems clear that the courses of adult criminal convictions can be traced back to childhood. The best predictors of convictions at age 21–24 years

Intervention may not be cost-effective when offenses do not persist.

Most delinquents do not become chronic criminals.

were convictions at age 17–20 and convictions at age 14–16. The best predictors of convictions at age 17–20 were convictions at age 14–16. The best predictor of convictions at age 14–16 were convictions at age 10–13 and daring behavior at age 8–10. And the best predictors of convictions at age 10–13 years was troublesome behavior at age 8–10 (p. 373).

In his study of a Philadelphia cohort of boys, Wolfgang (1980) discovered that 39 percent of the boys arrested as juveniles were rearrested as adults before their 30th birthdays, whereas only 9 percent of those not arrested as juveniles were subsequently arrested as adults. Conversely, he found that 69 percent of arrested adults had juvenile records, compared to 25 percent of the nonarrested adult group. McCord (1979), in a study with a protracted followup period (beyond age 45), found 47 percent of the serious juvenile offenders were similarly convicted as adults, compared with 18 percent of those not convicted as juveniles who subsequently became adult offenders. She determined that 42 percent of those convicted as adults had juvenile records, compared to 15 percent of the nonconvicted adults. Polk et al. (1981) and Shannon (1981) found similar relationships (Farrington, Ohlin, and Wilson, 1986:47–48). Longitudinal studies examining aggression have reached conclusions similar to those of criminality studies about the stability of behavior (Gersten et al., 1976; Olweus, 1979; Loeber, 1982; and Huesmann et al., 1984; reviewed by Henggeler, 1989:12).

From this impressive array of studies, one might conclude that offense patterns persist over the life course, just as Farrington did in the quote cited above. Policymakers might decide that intervention in the lives of delinquent and deviant children would or could reduce later criminality. However, it is important to recognize that most delinquents do not become chronic criminals. In the McCord (1979) study cited above, 53 percent of the serious juvenile delinquents had no adult convictions, and in Wolfgang's (1980) study, 61 percent of the arrested juveniles were not arrested as adults. Furthermore, somewhere between 10 and 20 percent of the adults with no juvenile offenses committed crimes. Given these findings, one could more often correctly predict that all nonjuvenile delinquents and all delinquents will be nonoffending adults than that all serious juvenile delinquents would become adult offenders and all nonjuvenile delinquents would become nonoffending adults.

What then can be said about continuity? The literature supports six general conclusions about the patterns of delinquency and criminality across the life course:

- Status and minor offenses do not necessarily lead to more serious crimes (Barnett, Blumstein, and Farrington, 1987; Elliott, Huizinga, and Morse, 1985; Datesman and Aickin, 1984; Holland and McGarvey, 1984; Rojek and Erickson, 1982; reviewed by Henggeler, 1989:13).
- A shift from property crime to personal crimes of violence may occur during adolescence (Wolfgang, 1980; Glueck and Glueck, 1950; McCord, McCord, and Zola, 1959; Robins, 1966).
- Age at onset is the single best predictor of continued delinquency and criminality (West and Farrington, 1977; Tolan and Lorion, 1988; Tolan, 1987; Wolfgang et al., 1972; Osborn and West, 1978; Loeber and Dishion, 1983).

- Chronic offenders (those who persist in their criminal behavior) commit crimes with greater frequency (Wolfgang et al., 1972; Polk et al., 1981; Wolfgang and Tracy, 1982), commit more serious crimes as children and young adolescents (Wolfgang et al., 1972; Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1987), continue committing crimes into adolescence (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1987:370), and are more versatile in their offending (Klein, 1984) than occasional youthful offenders who desist in their criminal behavior patterns.
- In contrast to the chronic offenders mentioned above, there is a group of nondeviant individuals who persist in their law-abiding behavior during adolescence and into adulthood (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1987:350).
- A middle group also exists whose criminal behavior is difficult to predict (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1987:350).

In sum, the research demonstrates that while many juvenile delinquents do not become adult offenders, behavioral problems during childhood often predict subsequent delinquency and criminality. Research suggests that some of these behavior problems initiate within the family. And finally, studies have shown that the road to criminality does not lend itself to simple explanations or causes—the road is complex and includes multiple pathways.

The road to criminality is complex, with multiple pathways.

Transitions may occur during the life course that change and redirect behavior. Although the experiences of infancy, childhood, and adolescence may greatly influence subsequent behavior and choices, according to Brim and Kagan (1980:1), humans retain their capacity to change. What transpires in the family during a child's life may influence that child's later behavior in terms of delinquency and criminality, but adult family life may also play an important role in changing the life course (Sampson and Laub, 1990:609–611).

One perspective, which appears to have considerable support, suggests that the experiences of infancy and early childhood exert a lifelong effect on behavior. The second view, which does not necessarily contradict the first, suggests that important changes occur across the life course from birth to death. This perspective holds that many individuals maintain considerable capacity for change and that the consequences of early childhood experiences are continually modified by events during adolescence and adulthood. This position advocates a much more open view of human development across the lifespan. The research discussed in the two following sections specifically addresses whether components of family life contribute to continuity and change in criminal offense patterns.

Juvenile delinquency

As early as 1915, experts in juvenile delinquency recognized the family's central role in determining delinquency. In *Juvenile Offenders*, Morrison (1915) observed that "among social circumstances which have a hand in determining the future of the individual it is enough for our present purpose to recognize that the family is chief" (p. 121). Seventy years later, Geismar and Wood (1986)

Antisocial behaviors lead to rejection by teachers and peers.

drew upon a much expanded literature to reach the same conclusion: "Family functioning variables as a group seem to be inextricably linked to delinquent behavior. Juvenile delinquency appears to occur disproportionately among children in 'unhappy homes'" (p. 30).

Several excellent reviews of this literature have been produced during the last decade. These reviews examine methodological and statistical issues of definition, measurement, control, sampling, and design that are not discussed in this monograph. Readers who wish delve into these topics should consult the original sources as well as the reviews.

Loeber and Dishion (1983) reviewed approximately 70 studies focusing on family characteristics that appear to be associated with subsequent delinquency. They found consistent predictors in relation to age of the child. For example, at age 6, family functioning predicts delinquency. Antisocial behavior and aggressiveness at age 9 indicate delinquent tendencies, while parental criminality at age 10 is a valid predictor. Educational factors predict delinquency at age 15. And finally, at age 16, if the child is involved in delinquency, continued delinquency is predictable.

A second review by Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) presented a meta-analysis of approximately 300 studies. They described four causal models: neglect, conflict, deviant behaviors and attitudes, and disruption paradigms. From these four models the researchers drew conclusions regarding the degrees of strength for predictive variables. They found the most powerful predictors to include parental supervision, parental rejection, and parent-child involvement. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber identified parents' marital relations and parental criminality as predictors of moderate strength. Parental discipline, parental health, and parental absence were found to predict delinquent behavior as well; however, they appeared to be weaker predictors.

Snyder and Patterson (1987) examined approximately 100 studies, which led them to develop a two-stage model of delinquency causation. They proposed that inept family socialization initially leads to trivial antisocial behaviors in children. These antisocial behaviors and lack of social skills lead to rejection by teachers and peers, drawing the child into association with other antisocial or socially inept youths. Snyder and Patterson viewed delinquency as an "end-product of inadequate socialization whose roots can be observed in childhood" (p. 218).

Snyder and Patterson (1987) found that discipline and positive parenting were modestly related to delinquency. Parental monitoring of the child had a somewhat stronger association, which Snyder and Patterson labeled as moderate. In comparison to these family functioning areas, conflict and problem solving had the weakest relationship with delinquency but still showed evidence of a modest association. The association of family structural characteristics including socioeconomic status, parental absence, parental criminality, and family size was unclear.

Henggeler (1989) reviewed the relationship between family transactions and child psychosocial functioning in 65 studies conducted over a 30-year period

and found delinquent behavior to stem from three areas. First, low levels of parental control strategies may be a source of delinquent behavior. Second, if parental controls are present, but are inept or ineffective, youths in these families are at risk for development of delinquency. Finally, the antisocial behavior of parents, including the degree to which deviant methods of meeting goals are acceptable, seems to be a strong predictor of delinquent behavior in young family members (p. 45).

Single-parent families

There is an intuitive appeal to the idea that a single parent, particularly when female, will be less able to effectively supervise, guide, and control a child or adolescent to insulate him or her from criminal or delinquent influences.

Research into the idea that single-parent homes may produce more delinquents dates back to the early 19th century. Officials at New York State's Auburn Penitentiary, in an attempt to discern the causes of crime, studied the biographies of incarcerated men. Reports to the legislature in 1829 and 1830 suggested that family disintegration resulting from the death, desertion, or divorce of parents led to undisciplined children who eventually became criminals (Rothman, 1990:65).

Now, well over a century later, researchers continue to examine the family background of unique populations and reach similar conclusions. Like their forerunners, many current investigations lack control groups for comparisons but still offer some insight into what can happen to children in single-parent families. Goetting (1989), for example, found that only 30 percent of children arrested for homicide in Detroit between 1977 and 1984 lived with both parents. In a study of 240 women committed to the California Youth Authority in the 1960's, Rosenbaum (1989) observed that only 7 percent came from intact families.

Two explanations of why single-parent families seem to produce more delinquents are frequently offered. Sociologists Matsueda and Heimer (1987) suggest that single parents can less effectively supervise their children simply because there is only one parent rather than two; consequently their children are more likely to come into contact with delinquent influences. Dornbusch et al. (1985) offer a second explanation, specific to single mothers, suggesting that the mother gives the adolescent a greater say in what he or she can do, thus reducing control over the youth. However, the relationship between single parenthood and delinquency may not be as simple as these commonly held opinions imply.

Teeters and Reinemann (1950) drew the following conclusion about the relationship in their 1950 textbook, *The Challenge of Delinquency*:

> For the student to wend his way through such a welter of conflicting opinion, coming as it does from experts, is indeed a confusing task. What he wants to know is: "Is there a positive relationship between the broken home and delinquency?" Apparently, no definite answer can be made to the question (p. 153).

Nineteenth-century reports suggested that family disintegration can result in undisciplined children who eventually become criminals.

Conflicting findings exist regarding the relationship between family structure and delinquency.

Thirty-six years and hundreds of studies later, Wells and Rankin (1986) reached a similar conclusion: "Despite a sizable body of research extending across various academic disciplines, the question of the causal connections between broken homes and delinquency remains unresolved and ambiguous" (p. 68).

The literature reveals conflicting findings and opinions regarding the relationship between family structure and delinquency. The relationship is, indeed, complex. However, from the cumulative body of the research, consistent patterns emerge that provide useful information about the causal relationship.

Many studies examining the singular relationship between single-parent families and delinquency have found a positive relationship (Gibson, 1969; Rutter, 1971; Wilkinson, 1980; Canter, 1982; Rankin, 1983; Matsueda and Heimer, 1987; LeFlore, 1988). Other studies have identified more specific breakdowns. For example, Gove and Crutchfield (1982) found the positive relationship to be true for males but not for females. Rosen (1985) observed a positive association between single-parent households and delinquency for male children in black families. Denno (1985) discovered among black families that the positive association exists for males but not females. Flewelling and Bauman (1990) observed a positive relationship between single-parent families and the use of a controlled substance or engaging in sexual intercourse. Brady et al. (1986), testing in a clinical setting, found that the children of single-parent families exhibited more behavioral problems. Children from single-parent families also appear to be more susceptible to peer pressure (Steinberg, 1987). In an observation study of mother/child interaction, Webster-Stratton (1989) found that single mothers issue more critical statements and that their children exhibit more deviant and noncompliant behaviors.

A major study of 1,517 boys by Loeber et al. (1991) explored the characteristics that linked with changes in offending over time. The researchers found that single parenthood correlated with delinquency across age groups from 7 to 8, 10 to 11, and 13 to 14. Children from single-parent homes were more likely to escalate their delinquency as they passed through adolescence, whereas children raised in two-parent homes were more likely to desist from delinquent behavior as they matured.

The National Incidence Studies on Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Throwaway Children in America (Finkelhor, Hotaling, and Sedlak, 1990) found that family division played a significant role in determining teenage runaways. "Thrownaway" children were more likely to come from single-parent homes. Furthermore, teenagers run away more often from families with stepparents and live-in boyfriends or girlfriends (Sweet, 1991).

Although the evidence is convincing, other studies contradict those cited. Rosen and Neilson (1982) and Farnworth (1984) found no association between single-parent families and delinquency. White et al. (1987) found a positive relationship to heavy alcohol use but not to delinquency or drug abuse. Gray-Ray and Ray (1990) identified no relationship between family type and delinquency for black children and adolescents. Additional support for this position was found by Parson and Mikawa (1991), who observed no difference between the percentages of incarcerated and nonincarcerated blacks from broken homes.

The association between single-parent families and delinquency is further clouded by a series of studies claiming that negative effects of single-parenthood may be caused by parental practices and family relations. In other words, the problems of single-parent families are explained by how parents relate to their children and how the family as a whole gets along. Several studies also suggest that the effect of single-parent homes is explained by conflict that occurred between the parents before and after the breakup (Herzog and Sudia, 1970; Bane, 1976; Rutter, 1977a and 1977b; Goetting, 1981; Blechman, 1982; Emery, 1982).

Henggeler (1989:48) suggested that greater autonomy for the adolescent (see also Dornbusch et al., 1985; Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986), less parental supervision (see also Steinberg, 1986; Van Voorhis et al., 1988; Laub and Sampson, 1988; Matsueda, 1982), less involvement with parents (see also Van Voorhis et al., 1988; Laub and Sampson, 1988), and, consequently, increased susceptibility to peer pressure determine delinquency. These factors are more likely to be present in single-parent families, although not exclusively so (Siegel and Senna, 1991:243–245). Along these same lines, Bayrakal and Kope (1990) claimed that children in single-parent families tend to grow up too fast (p. 6). These children may have a greater expectation for independence from parental control. For blacks, the presence of a father in the adolescent's life appears to be important (Rosen, 1985; Gray-Ray and Ray, 1990).

Other factors shown to influence this relationship are peer pressure (Steinberg 1987), personality (Widom et al., 1983), social class and criminality on the part of the father (Mednick et al., 1987), and conflict and coping strategies (Kurdek and Sinclair, 1988). Mednick et al. (1990) indicated that divorce followed by a stable family constellation is not associated with increased risk, but divorce followed by additional changes in family configuration significantly increases risk, particularly for adolescent males.

Three recent literature reviews help us to disentangle these disparate research findings. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) reviewed 15 studies, including 40 analyses of structural relationships. The review encompassed information indicating that 33 of the 40 assessments (83 percent) were statistically significant and that the effect of marital separation appeared to be somewhat greater on younger children. Marital discord was shown to be a better predictor of delinquency than family structure. Two studies (Glueck and Glueck, 1950; Zill, 1978) found that the death of a parent did not have the same effect as divorce on the child's behavior, which suggests that it is family relations, not just separation, that affects delinquency. Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber reviewed two studies of supervision that speak to the single-parent/delinquency question. Stouthamer-Loeber et al. (1984) found that single mothers and unhappily married mothers supervised less diligently and that more of them had negative opinions of their children. Goldstein (1984) found that high supervision in father-absent families reduced the probability of arrest.

A meta-analysis of 50 studies by Wells and Rankin (1991) suggests that the effect of broken homes on delinquency is real and consistent, but of relatively low magnitude. The "prevalence of delinquency in broken homes is 10 to 15 percent higher than in intact homes" (p. 87). The effect is strongest for minor

Marital discord appears to be a better predictor of delinquency than family structure.

Programs that assist single parents in supervising their children and that free them to spend more time with their children may help to prevent juvenile delinquency.

offenses and weakest for serious offenses. The Wells and Rankin review indicates that the type of breakup—death, desertion, or divorce—affects delinquency determination. Further, there appears to be no appreciable or consistent difference in effect on boys versus girls or blacks versus whites, no consistent effect related to the child's age, and, finally, no consistent effect of stepparents' presence within the family.

The general patterns observed by Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber and Wells and Rankin regarding family structure and delinquency are similarly described by McLanahan and Booth (1989: 564–565), who discuss more general consequences of growing up in mother-only families. During the 1950's and 1960's, researchers viewed divorce and births to unmarried mothers as pathological, and they expected children in such situations to exhibit undesirable behaviors. In the 1970's, that view began to change. Researchers argued that the differences between mother-only and two-parent families could be explained by other factors such as poverty. Now, studies examining the cumulative findings of the research are recognizing certain negative consequences of growing up in single-parent homes. While these recent studies acknowledge that there may be nothing inherently pathological with single parenthood, such a structure may lead to a set of conditions that contribute to delinquency, for example, greater autonomy for the adolescent, less parental control, and increased susceptibility to peer pressure. Therefore, designing programs that assist the single parent in supervising the child and that free the parent to spend more time with the child may reduce delinquency.

Up until now, this report, like most others, has been somewhat cavalier in its use of language describing different structural arrangements of families, not stopping to precisely define what is being studied. Many researchers use the words "broken" and "intact" to describe family structures. These words are value-laden. The word "broken" possesses a negative connotation and inasmuch as the purpose of this research is to determine the effect of family structure, it seems inappropriate to use a negative label for single-parenthood. Consider at least two examples when the loss of a parent may strengthen family relations: (1) The death of a parent, though tragic for the family, may draw members together, bonding them in a manner that gives the surviving parent considerable influence over the children. (2) The loss of a violent or psychologically abusive parent may remove the source that is pushing children out of the family and creating individual stress. One study found that the outcome of parental absence depended on the competence of the remaining parent. In fact, "separation seemed to have little or no adverse effect when the alternative was an intact family with conflict, low parental esteem, paternal alcoholism, or criminality" (McCord, 1990a: 132). A more precise definition of family structure is needed than a simple distinction between one- and two-parent families.

As Wells and Rankin (1986) have pointed out, one must contend with conceptual and measurement issues when contemplating and attempting to understand the relationship of single-parent homes to delinquency. Conceptual elements that must be considered include factors about the parent, parent absence, and the entire household. Regarding the parent, we must consider whether the parent is the biological, step-, or adoptive parent. Perhaps the "parent" is a guardian, for

example, the grandparents, foster parents, or some other significant and caring adult. Issues of absence must be viewed in terms of frequency and duration, amount of contact (total or partial), visitation, shared custody, and neglect. And we must include a close examination of the conceptual elements of the household. The middle-class, nuclear family living in a single-family home is only one form of family. Many others exist and produce positive outcomes for their children. It is important to look at who lives in the house or apartment. This may vary considerably and is an important cultural and socioeconomic factor that is virtually unexplored. Thinking about and understanding these concepts will help to clarify any inquiry into family structure and delinquency.

One of two single mothers lives in poverty.

McLanahan and Booth (1989:566–569) presented three explanations for the relationship between single-parent or mother-only families and delinquency: (1) economic deprivation, (2) socialization, and (3) neighborhood. In this monograph, a fourth theory is added: the justice system's response.

Looking first at economic deprivation, Denno (1985) and Farrington (1979), in their longitudinal research, showed delinquency to be related to the mother's income at the time of the child's birth and to the father's irregular employment (Morash and Rucker, 1989:83). Other studies indicate that one of two single mothers lives in poverty compared with one in ten two-parent families with children (Garfinkel and McLanahan, 1986). Additionally, studies have found single mothers to have fewer resources (e.g., time and money) to invest in their children.

The second theory, socialization, includes factors that can attenuate the effect of single parenthood, such as autonomy, supervision, affection, and conflict. To this list Morash and Rucker add "low hopes for education" (1989:84). Single parents may be less able to properly supervise, monitor, guide, and support their children to ensure their conformity to societal rules.

The third theory, neighborhood, recognizes that many single-parent families live in social isolation and in economically deprived neighborhoods (Wilson, 1987). This demographic reality results in decreased opportunity for economic mobility and is associated with greater likelihood that children will quit school or become pregnant as teenagers.

Felson (1986) and Felson and Cohen (1980) stated that two-parent households provide increased supervision and surveillance of property, while single parenthood increases likelihood of delinquency and victimization simply by the fact that there is one less person to supervise adolescent behavior. Sampson (1986a, 1986b, 1987a) confirmed this second hypothesis and suggested that single-parenthood indirectly decreases formal control because there is evidence of less participation in community and schools by single-parent families. Blau and Blau (1982) argued that marital disruption is a proxy for overall disorganization and alienation in the community.

Fourth, and finally, the criminal justice system may respond differently to the children from single-parent rather than two-parent families. Johnson (1986) argued that family structure is not related to frequency or seriousness of self-reported, illegal behavior but is related to self-reported trouble with police,

Most single-parent households do not produce delinquent children.

school, and juvenile court. Johnson concluded that officials may be more likely to respond to the behavior of children from mother-only families. Cogent to this point, Hagan and Palloni (1990) found in their study of the intergenerational transmission of crime within families that after controlling for child-rearing practices, evidence suggested that labeling of family members by crime-control agents tended to reproduce criminal behavior.

In summary, what do we know about single parenthood's contribution to delinquency?

- Economic conditions inherent to single-parent families may place children at greater risk.
- Socialization of children residing in single-parent homes may differ from those residing with two parents.
- "Bad" neighborhoods, where single parents often reside, may contribute to delinquency.
- The ways in which the system or officials from formal institutions such as school, police, and courts respond to children from single-parent homes may result in these children being more likely to be identified as delinquent.

What remains unknown or unclear?

- We lack a good understanding of parental practices and differences among the various types of households (McLanahan and Booth, 1989:573).
- We tend to see single-parent families in a monolithic way, neglecting attempts to understand the variations among these families that may produce successes as well as failures. Hartman (1990) indicated that at least 25 percent of all families with children are single-parent households. Most of these families do not produce delinquent children.
- Similarly, we lack knowledge about the variation among two-parent families.

Marital discord

What effect does observing marital conflict have in determining delinquent behavior? After discussing mother-only family structures, the question that frequently follows asks, "Is a home with a bad marriage better for the children than a home with no marriage?"

In the previous section, we noted that many researchers have attributed the higher rate of delinquency among offspring of single-parent families to the effect of marital discord. Some of the earliest research identified this relationship. Glueck and Glueck (1950) observed that one-third of the delinquent boys in their sample were raised in homes with poor conjugal relations between the parents. Nye's (1958) research indicated like findings, that serious or excessive marital discord predicted delinquency better than divorce or single parenthood. In further support of these findings, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986:72) noted that a number of review articles examining the effect of divorce and

family conflict (Herzog and Sudia, 1970; Bane, 1976; Rutter, 1977a and 1977b; Goetting, 1981; Blechman, 1982; Emery, 1982) downplayed the relevance of divorce and single parenthood to children's behavioral problems and emphasized marital discord as stronger in predicting delinquency.

Given the general recognition of the importance of marital discord in predicting delinquency, one would expect a considerable body of conclusive research on the topic. However, this is not the case. The overall lack of studies led Koski (1988:33) to conclude that parent-to-parent violence and marital discord has received minimal attention in the research literature.

Still, one does find strong statements within the existing literature regarding the relationship of marital discord and delinquency. Minty (1988) asserts that marital conflict is "strongly associated with juvenile delinquency and conduct disorder" (p. 172). Likewise, Kruttschmitt et al. (1986) found exposure to parental conflict to be one of the most important background experiences affecting violent criminal behavior in young adult males. Additionally, Grych and Fincham (1990) concluded from a literature review that marital conflict is "highly associated" with children's adjustment. In a startling finding, Jaffe et al. (1986) claimed that "boys exposed to violence between parents had a pattern of adjustment problems similar to abused boys" (p. 142) And, finally, Holden and Ritchie (1991) found that children raised in homes where the mother was battered had more behavioral problems and more difficult temperaments and tended to be more aggressive.

A recent study published in *Science* suggested that "the effect of divorce on children can be predicted by conditions that existed well before the separation occurred" (Cherlin et al., 1991:252). Emery (1988) and Long and Forehand (1987) further stated that marital disharmony is the operative factor, not separation or life in a single-parent home.

The list of studies demonstrating a positive relationship between parental conflict and delinquency is lengthy (Heatherington, Stouwie, and Ridberg, 1971; West and Farrington, 1973; Bach-y-Rita and Veno, 1974; Simcha-Fagan et al., 1975; Sendi and Blomgren, 1975; Sorrells, 1977; Richards et al., 1979; Lewis et al., 1979; McCord, 1979, 1988b, 1990b; Straus et al., 1981; Gove and Crutchfield, 1982; Hanson et al., 1984; Hartstone and Hansen, 1984; Roff and Wirt, 1985; Borduin et al., 1986; Tolan, 1987; Koski, 1988; Tolan and Lorion, 1988; Mann et al., 1990). Several studies look at parental disharmony and other behavioral outcomes frequently linked with delinquency or future delinquent behavior. These outcomes include such behavior as playing with matches and setting fires (Kolko and Kazdin, 1990), parents' perceptions of their child as antagonistic (Hill and Holmbeck, 1987), parental ratings of children's aggressiveness (DiLalla et al., 1988), behavioral and emotional problems in children who witness marital discord, (Hershorn and Rosenbaum, 1985), and fighting at home and in school (Loeber and Dishion, 1984).

Lorion, Tolan, and Wahler (1987) note that the families of delinquents have greater frequency of parental disagreements, less differentiation between parents and children about who makes decisions, less positive and more negative affect (experience of emotion or feeling), more misinterpreted communication, and less willingness to compromise.

Marital conflict is "highly associated" with children's adjustment.

Marital discord is consistently related to delinquency.

Literature reviews indicate that marital discord is consistently related to delinquency but that the relationship is of moderate strength among the list of family attributes that contribute to delinquency. Widom (1989b:22) claimed that witnessing violence within the home yields a consistent but modest relationship with delinquency. Similarly, Snyder and Patterson (1987) argued that the relationship between conflict and delinquency is "quite modest and somewhat sketchy" (p. 225). Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986:77) found in 11 cross-sectional studies and 8 longitudinal studies that marital discord was a medium-strength predictor.

Half of all marriages end in divorce (Wattenberg, 1986:21); consequently, many children witness marital discord preceding divorce. For those who do, the literature and research lacks information about which explicit factors precipitate delinquency. The literature is severely hampered by this lack of adequate attention to the nature and extent of discord, which may vary from occasional verbal confrontations to overt violence. However, although the prevalence of marital discord in this country is extremely high, most of the children involved do not become delinquent.

Grych and Fincham (1990) pointed out that conflict may differ by frequency, intensity, duration, and outcome. Witnesses may vary in age, gender, and ethnicity. Other dimensions such as the resolution and content of the conflict may also influence the effect on the child's development. Grych and Fincham concluded that (1) exposure to frequent incidents of conflict leads to greater problems and cessation of conflict leads to a reduction in problems, (2) the intensity of conflict is related to the level of distress, (3) children as young as age 2 may be influenced by parental conflict, and (4) conflict affects both girls and boys.

What then, do we know about marital discord and delinquency?

- There is consistently a positive relationship.
- Children who witness marital discord are at greater risk of becoming delinquents. Social learning theory argues that aggressive behavior is learned; as parents display aggressive behavior, children learn to imitate it as an acceptable means of achieving goals.
- However, most children who witness marital conflict do not become delinquent.

We do not know much about the specific aspects of conflict that lead to delinquency.

Child abuse

In the previous section, we discussed the effects of witnessing conflict and violence between parents on children's propensity toward delinquency. What happens when the child is the direct recipient of violence? Does child abuse and neglect lead to subsequent delinquency and criminality?

The relationship between abuse and delinquency has been described as a "cycle of violence" or the "intergenerational transmission of violence" and attributed to the notion that "violence begets violence" (Widom, 1989b:3). Curtis (1963:386) boldly stated that abused and neglected children "become tomorrow's murderers and perpetrators of other crimes of violence" (quoted by Widom, 1989b), and Siegel and Senna (1991) claimed that abuse "encourages [the victims] to use aggression as a means of solving problems, prevents them from feeling empathy for others, and diminishes their ability to cope with stress" (p. 265). Looking directly at juvenile criminals, Lewis et al. (1988) found that of the 37 young people condemned to death in the United States, 12 had been brutally physically abused and 5 had been sodomized by relatives.

Youth may leave home and join gangs because they are abandoned or neglected by their parents.

One of the strongest positions taken on the relationship of abuse and delinquency comes from Fleisher's (forthcoming) study of the Crips and Bloods, west coast street gangs. Based upon interviews with gang members on the streets and in prison, Fleisher argues that, almost without exception, these boys "grow up in dangerous family environments." Youth may leave home and join gangs to escape the violence or drift away because they are abandoned or neglected by their parents and there is no "comfort, protection, security, or emotional warmth in the home." As a consequence, these young men develop what Fleisher calls a "defensive world view," characterized by six attributes: (1) a feeling of vulnerability and a need to protect oneself, (2) a belief that no one can be trusted, (3) a need to maintain social distance, (4) a willingness to use violence and intimidation to repel others, (5) an attraction to similarly defensive people, and (6) an expectation that no one will come to their aid.

As with marital discord, there is a dearth of literature on abuse and its relationship to delinquency. In fact, Widom (1989b), in the most extensive review of such literature, concluded that "knowledge of the long-term consequence of abusive home environments is limited" (p. 3). However, four major reviews have addressed the relationship of delinquency and abuse (Lane and Davis, 1987; Koski, 1988; Widom, 1989b; and Howing et al., 1990).

Koski (1988) concluded, "Overwhelmingly, although not without exception, the studies conducted since 1964 have found a positive correlation between parent-child aggression/violence/abuse/physical punishment and aggression on the part of the child" (p. 24). Still, Lane and Davis (1987) found that they could not form an opinion about the relationship because of methodological problems in existing studies. Koski (1988) identified three studies that found no relationship between abuse and delinquency (Bolton et al., 1977; Gully et al., 1981; Reich and Guiterres, 1979) and three studies that obtained mixed findings (Guarino, 1985; Straus, 1981; Welsh, 1976).

A review by Howing et al. (1990) indicated that studies based on official records of abuse have found that between 9 and 26 percent of the delinquents have records of abuse (Lewis and Shanok, 1977; Shanok and Lewis, 1981; Kratcoski, 1982), whereas studies based on delinquents' self-reports of abuse indicate the figure to be from 51 to 69 percent (Mouzakitis, 1981; Rhoades and Parker, 1981). Studies of abused children find delinquency rates of 14 to 20

Not all children who grow up in violent homes become violent.

percent (Bolton, Reich, and Guiterres, 1977; Silver, Dublin, and Lourie, 1969). Histories of abuse distinguish violent and nonviolent delinquents, with considerably higher rates of abuse among violent offenders (Alfaro, 1983; Lewis et al., 1985; Lewis et al., 1979; Shanok and Lewis, 1981; Tarter et al., 1984). The characteristics of the parents also seem to affect whether the abused child will become delinquent (Henggeler, 1989:46).

A 1989b review by Widom concluded that abuse breeds abuse. There appears to be a higher likelihood of abuse among parents who were abused themselves; however, the majority of abusive parents were not themselves abused as children. Based on the research of Kaufman and Zigler (1987), Widom (1989b:8) estimated that about one-third of the individuals who were abused as children will abuse their own children.

In making a connection among abuse, neglect, and delinquency, Widom (1989b) indicated that of those who had been abused or neglected as children, delinquency occurred in fewer than 20 percent of the cases. Various studies found between 8 and 26 percent of the delinquents had been abused.

A review of 12 studies that specifically examined the connections among abuse, neglect, and violent behavior produced contradictory results (Widom, 1989b). Some studies found strong support; others found no difference at all. Of the abused children who became delinquent, the majority were not violent in their delinquency. There was little indication of a lasting effect on violence.

When Widom herself examined the link through developmental/clinical studies, she found, "By and large, these studies indicate with some consistency that abused children manifest more aggressive and problematic behavior even at early ages" (1989b:19). Widom notes that not only do abused children manifest more aggressive and problematic behavior at early ages, but research indicates that these children are not likely to outgrow the aggressive patterns as they mature. Evidence suggests that some victims of abuse become self-abusive and self-destructive.

Overall, the Widom (1989b) review drew several important conclusions. Not all children who grow up in violent homes become violent adults; however, being abused as a child may increase the risk for becoming an abusive parent, a delinquent, or a violent adult criminal. As with the connection between single-parent families, it cannot be said that the road from abuse to delinquent, violent, or criminal behavior is straight or certain (p. 24). Again, the relationships are complex and interrelated.

The empirical research reports specific findings about abuse and its relationship to delinquency. Doerner (1987) found that several types of maltreatment, both physical and emotional, were associated with delinquency. In contrast, Brown (1984) found that only emotional, and not physical, abuse correlated with subsequent delinquency. Burgess et al. (1987) linked sexual abuse with later delinquency. Particularly serious or prolonged abuse was associated with higher rates of deviance.

Widom (1989a and 1989b) said that childhood victimization has a small but strongly indicated long-term consequence on adult criminal records. Twenty-nine percent of abused children compared with 21 percent of the control group were arrested as adults. Widom also points toward findings that abused females did not become violent but had higher rates of status and minor property offenses.

In another study, among abused males parental conflict and family criminality distinguished those who became delinquent from those who did not (Kruttschmitt et al. 1987). Among abused females, Seng (1989) found a two-stage process leading to prostitution: girls first run away, then engage in prostitution to survive. Looking specifically at sexually abused females, Morrow and Sorell (1989) found that the severity of sexual assault (sexual intercourse compared to fondling) was related to lower self-esteem, depression, antisocial behavior, and self-injury. Also the postdisclosure responses by the mother and the perpetrator, when they blamed the victim or demeaned the significance of the victimization, exacerbated the effect.

From the literature, what do we know about the relationship of abuse to delinquency?

- We know there is a link. Being abused increases the risk of delinquency.
- However, most abused children do not become abusive parents, delinquents, or violent adult criminals.

What we do not know is similar to unknown issues concerning parental conflict.

- What are the aspects of the abuse that directly influence delinquency?
- Why do some abused children become delinquent and others do not? Factors such as the frequency, duration, and termination of the abuse must be studied more completely to show how these aspects of abuse influence delinquent behavior.
- Unknown, as well, are important factors for intervention.

Family effect

Previously, we examined the effect of physical violence inflicted on children by their parents. What about the psychological effects of rejection and the withholding of affection? Do they contribute to delinquency? This section looks at rejection versus affection, involvement, and cohesion within the family unit.

The premise is that children who are raised in supportive, affectionate, and accepting environments tend to become self-aware adults who can formulate their own long-term goals and can successfully pursue socially and economically fulfilling lives. In contrast, children of harsh, unloving, overly critical, and authoritarian parents often become self-absorbed as adults. Their impulsiveness can result in violence and substance abuse (Chollar, 1987:12).

Children raised in supportive environments tend to become successful adults.

Parental rejection is a strong predictor of delinquency.

Early research conducted by the Gluecks (1950) found that, indeed, the parents of delinquents were less affectionate. Bandura and Walters (1959) in some early studies concluded that parents, particularly fathers, of delinquents tend to be more rejecting and less affectionate toward their children. Nye (1958) found that parent-child acceptance or, conversely, rejection—mutual and unilateral—was strongly related to delinquency.

It seems probable, then, that rejection of children by their parent(s) may increase the chances for delinquency. Gray-Ray and Ray (1990) found this to be true for black males, and Kroupa's (1988) findings indicate that incarcerated girls perceived their parents as more rejecting than nonincarcerated girls. More generally, Stouthamer-Loeber and Loeber (1986) found lying among young boys to be related to rejection by their mothers and, to a lesser extent, by their fathers. Fighting at home and school was also shown to be related to rejection by parent(s) (Loeber and Dishion, 1984). Even after controlling for other family factors, rejection continued to show moderate relationship with delinquency (Simons, Robertson, and Downs, 1989). Pfouts et al. (1981) stated that children rejected by both parents are more likely to be delinquent than when they are supported and loved by one parent.

When researchers have examined the positive side of family relations, they have found it to be associated with a reduced likelihood of delinquency. Studies have indicated a positive relationship between affection (Smith and Walters, 1978; McCord, 1979; Fox et al., 1983; Henggeler et al., 1985; Borduin, Pruitt, and Henggeler, 1986; Cernkovick and Giordano, 1987; Van Voorhis et al., 1988), cohesion (Rodick, Henggeler, and Hanson, 1986; Campbell, 1987; Tolan, 1987; Johnson, 1987; Tolan and Loreon, 1988; Tolan, 1988), and involvement and reduced risk of delinquency.

Cochran and Bø (1989) explored "involvement" in a Norwegian study and found that less interrelatedness between parent and child was linked with greater likelihood of delinquency. Rosen (1985) found father-son interaction to be the single most important variable explaining delinquency of black boys; 48 percent of the boys with low involvement became delinquent, while only 25 percent of those with high involvement followed the path to delinquency. For white boys as well, involvement was significantly related, but the relationship was considerably weaker.

McCord (1983) produced a prospective study that assigned boys to four groups based on interaction with parents. The groups consisted of boys who were (1) loved—parent genuinely concerned; (2) abused—subjected to frequent physical punishment; (3) neglected—little interaction; and (4) rejected—frequent displeasure. Results showed an interesting pattern: 11 percent of the loved, 20 percent of the abused and neglected, and 50 percent of the rejected children committed serious crimes. From this study, it appears that parental rejection significantly influences the likelihood of delinquency, even more so than physical abuse.

Based upon the studies reviewed, parental rejection appears to be among the most powerful predictors of juvenile delinquency. Surprisingly, beyond that we know little about how rejection contributes to delinquency causation. Do paren-

tal activities such as monitoring and discipline interact with rejection? What about the developmental aspects of the relationship? Does the age of the child matter? How extensive does the rejection have to be—1 week, 6 months? Much remains to be learned.

As children mature, their loyalty shifts from parents to peers.

The research just discussed examined parents' ties to their children—rejection versus affection, involvement, and cohesion. What about the child's attachment to parents? How does that relate to delinquency?

Hirschi's (1969) social control theory suggests that individuals conform to societal norms when they are "bonded" to society. When ties are weakened or broken, then the individual is free to be criminal. According to Hirschi (1969:16–27), four elements determine the extent to which people bond to society: involvement, commitment, belief, and attachment to society's institutions. Similarly, attachment to conventional parents is considered to be an important link between parent and child. Attachment provides the necessary link that allows parents' ideals and expectations to be expressed and received. When alienated from the parent, the child will not internalize moral rules or develop an adequate conscience (p. 86). Based upon his own research, Hirschi concluded that "the closer the child's relations with his parents, the more he is attached to and identified with them, the lower his chances of delinquency" (p. 94).

Bonding to parents is viewed as an essential element in the developmental process leading to conformity. Poor child-parent attachment reduces commitment to academic and long-term social and economic goals. Without such commitments, school failure is more likely, thus reducing the chances of conventional success. In this manner, initial absence of child-parent bonding is tied to subsequent bonding with society's conventional institutions.

Several studies support Hirschi's theory about attachment to parents (Linden and Fillmore, 1981; Canter, 1982; Hanson et al., 1984; Agnew, 1985; Figueira-McDonough, 1985; Fagan, Piper, and Moore, 1986; Fagan and Wexler, 1987; Paternoster and Triplett, 1988; Gardner and Shoemaker, 1989; Blaske et al., 1989; Rankin and Wells, 1990; Mak, 1990; Smith, Weiher, and Van Kammen, 1991). However, the research has consistently found that the relationship between attachment to parents and delinquency, although present, is relatively weak and secondary to loyalty and participation in a delinquent peer group (Hanson et al., 1984) or exposure to delinquent influences (Matsueda, 1982; Matsueda and Heimer, 1987). As children mature, their loyalty apparently shifts away from parents toward the peer group.

Four studies (LaGrange and White, 1985; Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986; Smith and Paternoster, 1987; Paternoster, 1988) point to the developmental aspects of attachment. As a child moves into adolescence, a shift in attachment from parents occurs. Paternoster (1988:177) reported that parental influence tends to wane over the 3-year high school period, while friends' influence became slightly stronger.

Delinquent behavior may lead to parental rejection.

Based on this research, what do we know about family affect and delinquency?

- A healthy home environment, one in which parents and children share affection, cohesion, and involvement, reduces the risk of delinquency.
- Parental rejection appears to be one of the most significant predictors of delinquency.
- Not only does parental attachment to children influence the likelihood of delinquency, but apparently so does the attachment of the child to the parent. This dual relationship implies an interaction between characteristics of both the parent and the child.

Interaction

Parental rejection appears to influence delinquency. However, delinquent behavior produces considerable stress within the family and may lead to parental rejection. The relationship may be bidirectional or reciprocal in nature. Snyder and Patterson (1987) expressed this idea, noting that "the child is both victim and architect of his own environment" (p. 237).

The components of the reciprocal relationship are complex. Sameroff and Seifer (1983) suggested that "the development of the child appears to be multiply determined by what the child brings to the situation, what [she or he] elicits from the situation, what the environment can offer and what it does offer" (p. 12). Patterson (1982) identified a "coercive cycle" in mother/aggressive-child interactions. Simply stated, the child's antisocial behavior is followed by negative reactions by the parent. This, in turn, escalates the child's antisocial, aggressive behavior, triggering a cycle that is both cause and effect. (See also Bell's 1977 model of reciprocity.)

Widom et al. (1983:287) attempted to explain the personality differences between delinquent and nondelinquent girls, suggesting that the ongoing and reciprocal interaction between harsh, unpredictable environments and individuals with impulsive and stimulation-seeking behavioral styles may initiate a coercive cycle. Gove and Crutchfield (1982:315) found that parents' perceptions or sense of understanding of their child is one of the strongest predictors of juvenile delinquency. They suggested that the tendency not to get along well with the child and dissatisfaction with the child's behavior promotes negative parental behavior—reduced supervision and greater use of physical punishments—which probably further encourages misbehavior on the part of the child. This actuates a vicious cycle that leads to an escalation of the child's misbehavior.

Lytton (1990:683) identified three factors in the reciprocal relationship between parent and child: (1) characteristics of the child, (2) the parental behavior (those elements already discussed, such as supervision, affection, etc.), and (3) reciprocal effects. Before turning to reciprocal effects let us briefly touch on some of the research exploring the role of individual predisposition or background in determining delinquency. In acknowledging the child's role, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) suggested that parents are the child's first really serious victims.

Researchers have found considerable stability in aggressive and antisocial behavior, particularly when that behavior is extensive and initiated at an early age (Olweus, 1979; Loeber, 1982; Huesmann et al., 1984). This evidence has led researchers to postulate a predisposition toward aggression and antisocial behavior that may be transmitted down through generations. Some evidence suggests that the child's tendencies toward antisocial behavior are even stronger than parental influence in determining delinquent outcomes (Lytton, 1990:693; see also Anderson, Lytton, and Romney, 1986.)

A child's predisposition toward impulsive, aggressive, and antisocial behavior has been attributed to genetic (Huesmann et al., 1984) and biological factors. Faretra (1981) identifies several aspects of personal pathology, including genetic determination (Schulsinger, 1980), brain damage and mental retardation (Caputo and Mandell, 1970), low intelligence (Moffitt et al., 1980), neurotic and psychotic disorders, and psychopathic traits, as factors in determining conduct disorder. Henggeler et al. (1986:133) offered a more inclusive explanation implicating many aspects of the child's biopsychosocial makeup, including the child's cognitive strengths and weaknesses, physical appearance, coordination, attitudes, beliefs, and the presence of disabilities or handicaps. The National Health/Education Consortium (1991) expressed a specific biological factor, stating that prenatal health, ingestion of lead and other toxins, and exposure to cocaine and other drugs are all related to brain development and possibly to behavioral problems.

Regarding the interactive nature of parent/child relations, researchers have observed that parents with a difficult child may cease parenting to gain superficial peace within the home. With a particularly unruly child, the parents may not only fail to discipline, but may come to dislike the child, adding rejection to the already problematic relationship (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986).

Parents with a difficult child may cease parenting to gain peace within the home.

The reciprocal nature of misbehavior has been explored by research of two related phenomena—conduct disorders and juvenile delinquency. Juvenile delinquency is the legal term used to describe violation of the law committed by minors. Conduct disorders pertain to the child's or adolescent's relationship to social norms and rules of conduct, frequently including persistent acts of aggressive and/or antisocial behavior (Carson, Butcher, and Coleman, 1988).

Barkley (1990:168) observed that children who suffer attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD) are difficult children for parents to manage; however, ADHD children are also more likely to have parents who also have ADHD. For the more aggressive and hostile ADHD children, there is a particularly high prevelance of mental illness (see also Cohen et al., 1990: 255). Barkley hypothesized that the parents' psychiatric states influence their mood, which leads to negative parenting behaviors, creating an amplifying process that results in entrenchment of hostile, defiant, and antisocial behaviors among the children.

Some researchers have demonstrated that aggressive, antisocial acts in childhood and adolescence predict future delinquent behavior. Faretra (1981) found that among 66 aggressive and disturbed adolescents who had been admitted to an inpatient psychiatric unit, antisocial and criminal behavior persisted into adulthood; however, there was a lessening of the psychiatric involvement.

Delinquent acts weaken the youth's bonds to family, school, and conventional beliefs.

The most antisocial children in this sample were from homes with histories of antisocial problems, single-parent homes, and/or impoverished homes.

Sanders et al. (1989) examined the interactions among family members and argued that the single best predictor of child deviant behavior is maternal rejection of the child. Interestingly, they found the best predictor of maternal rejection or aversion was the child's deviant behavior. Sanders labeled the problem a "negative reinforcement trap" (p. 80–81). Lytton (1990) and Anderson et al. (1986) have supported this depiction of mother/child relations.

In testing his theory of coercive cycles, Patterson (Patterson, 1986; Patterson and Bank, 1986; Patterson, Dishion, and Bank, 1984) consistently found support for the reciprocal relationship of family relations and conduct disorders. Baldwin and Skinner (1989) replicated the findings.

Recognizing the reciprocal and bidirectional nature of the relationship between child and parents, Henggeler et al. (1986) conducted a treatment experiment using the family-ecological approach for inner-city juvenile offenders and their families. This method addresses the multidimensional nature of behavioral problems, exploring individual deficits such as poor social and problem-solving skills, inappropriate child and family interactions, and problematic transactions with extrafamilial systems such as the peer group and the school. Therapy is individualized and focused on the most important determinants of the child's problem behavior (p. 133). Observation revealed that interactions became warmer and more affectionate with treatment. In turn, parents reported that their children's conduct problems, immature behavior, and relationship with delinquents decreased.

Thornberry (1987:876), speaking from the perspective of social control theory, argued that as the child or adolescent participates or engages in more frequent delinquent behavior while associating increasingly with delinquent peers, his/her bond to conventional society grows weaker. The weakening of the bond to conventional society may be an initial cause of delinquency, as social control theorists have proposed. Continued and increased delinquent acts may become their own indirect cause as they further weaken the youth's bonds to family, school, and conventional beliefs. Results from three longitudinal studies of delinquency and drug use conducted in Pittsburgh, Rochester, and Denver found a modest but significant reciprocal relationship between delinquency and attachment. Prior low levels of family attachment and poor parenting actions (failure to communicate with and monitor children) were related with subsequently higher levels of delinquency and drug use. Conversely, prior high levels of delinquency and drug use were related with subsequently low levels of family attachment and poor parenting. It seems that poor family life makes delinquency worse, and a high level of delinquency makes family life worse (Smith, Weiher, and Van Kammen, 1991; see also Thornberry et al., 1991).

This research on causes of delinquency makes a major contribution to our understanding of the interaction of the family and delinquency.

- A child's predisposition toward impulsive, aggressive, and antisocial behavior may initiate a process within the family that ultimately leads to delinquency.
- Parents of a difficult child may stop parenting to gain peace within the home and may come to reject the child.
- Antisocial patterns established within the family may be exacerbated and reinforced as the child enters school.
- As the child enters adolescence, delinquent acts may further weaken the youth's attachment to family, school, and conventional ties.

The topic of interaction is complex and requires further study as it may lead to new strategies for intervention at a variety of points in the youth's life and his or her family and community.

Parental criminality

What role does parental criminality play, if any, in relation to delinquency? In the preceding sections, we observed that some children who witness or who are the victims of violence and conflict within the family learn and imitate that behavior as adolescents and adults. Might it be the same for children whose parents engage in criminal behavior? Do children of criminal parents learn criminality?

As likely as this proposition may seem, the literature contains few studies of the relationship. Perhaps the topic has received so little attention because it seems self-evident to many or, more likely, because it is a difficult matter to explore.

The Gluecks (1950 and 1968) determined that delinquents were more likely than nondelinquents to have delinquent fathers and mothers. Subsequent studies supported the Gluecks' findings, observing that delinquent boys were more likely to have delinquent or criminal parents (Johnson, 1979; Osborn and West, 1978; McCord, 1979). In a study of the families of black delinquents in St. Louis, Robins et al. (1975) found that a child's delinquent behavior was associated with the arrest(s) of one or both parents in their adult years and a history of juvenile delinquency on the part of the parent(s). Children with two parents with criminal histories were at extremely high risk of delinquency.

The most extensive investigation of the relationship of parental criminality to juvenile delinquency has been conducted by West and Farrington in their longitudinal study of British boys (West and Farrington, 1973; West and Farrington, 1977). They concluded that "the fact that delinquency is transmitted from one generation to the next is indisputable" (p. 109). Their study results showed that criminal fathers tend to produce criminal sons (p. 116). They concluded that the same is probably true of criminal mothers, but there were so few criminal mothers in their sample that they could not make a definitive assessment.

In trying to understand how criminal fathers and delinquent sons are linked, West and Farrington (1977) found that fathers apparently do not directly involve or encourage their sons to become delinquent. Furthermore, criminal

Delinquent boys are more likely to have delinquent or criminal parents.

Parents who encourage mature behavior enhance their children's sense of responsibility.

fathers censured criminal activity among their children just as noncriminal parents did. The difference between criminal and noncriminal fathers appears to be in the amount of supervision they provided their sons.

Laub and Sampson (1988) in their reanalysis of the Gluecks' data found that criminal parents did not directly encourage their children to be delinquent. Parental criminality tends to disrupt the family's social control, which, in turn, increases delinquency (p. 375). Along with criminality, a father's drunkenness influences the father's and the mother's supervision and ability to discipline. Both parents in families in which the father drinks heavily are more likely to use force as well as inconsistent discipline than families without a criminal or drunken father.

To summarize:

- Children who have criminal parents are at greater risks of becoming delinquent themselves.
- Research seems to be revealing a pattern of disrupted family functioning resulting from the father's and possibly the mother's criminality.

Much remains unknown about the relationship of parents' criminality and delinquency on the part of their children. Some factors to consider in future research may include:

- The presence of the delinquent parent in family life.
- Whether a supportive parent can buffer the effects of a criminal parent.
- How much the child actually knows and observes about the activities of the criminal parent.
- Whether the parent is caught and punished.
- The relationship to other variables such as affection, supervision, and other parenting attributes.

Positive parenting

So far, this report has focused predominantly on negative parental behavior—conflict, abuse, and rejection. What about positive parenting practices? Can parents, through effective socialization, prevent delinquent behavior among their offspring?

To address this topic, one must first consider what constitutes effective or positive parenting. Baumrind (1967 and 1971) described a model that has been extensively tested and fits well with this task. The basic tenet of the model states that parents who clearly communicate expectations for acceptable and mature behavior, and who monitor and encourage adherence to those standards, enhance their children's sense of social responsibility. Baumrind labels this type of parenting as authoritative, in contrast to authoritarian and permissive parenting. Authoritarian parents rely heavily on coercive controls, but tend to be inconsistent in their application. Permissive parents are not inclined to discipline but, in avoiding confrontation over the child's misbehavior, fail to define and encourage mature behavior.

In addition to affection, already discussed, three elements appear to characterize positive parenting: (1) normative regulation, (2) monitoring, and (3) discipline (Wells and Rankin, 1988; Snyder and Patterson, 1987:220). The literature has paid considerably more attention to the latter two elements than the first, so one can begin with monitoring and discipline (which some researchers group together under the general heading of supervision).

Too little or too much parental control leads to deviance.

Supervision

In outlining the necessary elements of effective parental supervision, Patterson (1980:81) listed the following actions: notice what the child is doing, monitor it over long periods of time, model social skill behavior, clearly state house rules, consistently provide some punishments for transgressions, provide reinforcement for conformity, and negotiate disagreement so the conflicts and crises do not escalate. Monitoring children involves awareness of their companions, whereabouts, and free-time activities. It includes appropriate communication, accountability of the child to the parents, and the amount of time spent with parents (Larzelere and Patterson, 1990).

Snyder and Patterson (1987:227) have noted that monitoring becomes increasingly important as the child progresses into adolescence. Adequate supervision allows parents to influence the child's selection of friends and activities, express disapproval, and sanction antisocial and delinquent behavior.

Parents of delinquents were found to be indifferent to these factors in their children's lives (Patterson and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984:1305). According to Snyder and Patterson's (1987) review of the literature, monitoring consistently accounts for moderate amounts of variance in delinquent behavior (p. 229). In their literature review, Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986) found that supervision emerges as one of the most powerful predictors of juvenile delinquent behavior. Based on their reanalysis of the Gluecks' data, Laub and Sampson (1988) concluded that monitoring is one of the most significant predictors. Fischer (1984), Wilson (1987), McCord (1979), Van Voorhis et al. (1988), Cernkovich and Giordano (1987), and Loeber, Weiher, and Smith (1991), concluded that, irrespective of family structure, supervision is a key variable in predicting delinquency.

In further support of the importance of parental supervision, Wells and Rankin (1988) and Rankin and Wells (1990) found, after controlling for attachment, that direct parental controls (i.e., rule specification, monitoring, and punishment) are significantly related to delinquency. Importantly, parental controls are related in a nonlinear manner to delinquency. Too little or too much leads to greater deviance. These findings about discipline are consistent with the earlier findings by Glueck and Glueck (1968) as well as Kraus (1977) and Loeber, Weissman, and Reid (1983). Apparently, effective discipline includes parents backing up their threats, controlling their anger, being consistent regardless of mood, being consistent with each other, being firm, and using reasoning.

Several studies have found evidence suggesting that physical punishments and verbal aggression to correct misbehavior may in the long run increase the probability of deviance and aggression (Nagaraja, 1984; Patterson, 1982; and

Parental supervision is a critical factor in deterring delinquency.

Patterson, Bank, and Reid 1987). Strauss' (1991) research suggests that physical punishments may have short-term effects on children's compliance but in the long term will lead to increased misbehavior by weakening bonds to parents, modeling violence, and lowering self-esteem. McCord (1991a:175) suggests that the use of punishment, both physical and nonphysical, teaches children to concentrate only on the consequences of the behavior on themselves rather than the effect on others. She argues for teaching children to be compassionate and to consider the social consequences of their actions.

The extensive longitudinal research of the Youth Studies conducted in Pittsburgh, Rochester, and Denver discovered that when family conflict arose over issues of discipline—when parents failed to discipline and children's behavior worsened after discipline—then delinquency was more likely to follow. Consistent with this theme, parental involvement with the child and the extent to which the child was supervised were found to be related to delinquency and drug abuse (Loeber, Weiher, and Smith, 1991).

The most extensive research on parental control has been conducted at the Oregon Social Learning Center, which has developed a model of the developmental process leading to delinquency. The process often begins during early childhood with maladaptive parent-child interactions that actually reward the child for antisocial behavior. As a child ages and spends more time outside the home, those negative behaviors learned at home are likely to appear in other settings. In school, the child's antisocial disposition may interfere with learning and often will result in the child being disliked by peers. The failing, disliked, and antisocial child will gravitate toward peers and social settings that reinforce his or her behavior, which in turn may further encourage the child's antisocial actions. Poor parental monitoring and supervision during middle childhood is linked with involvement with antisocial peers just before the onset of adolescence. Support for this model has been generated over the past decade by numerous studies (Patterson, 1980; Loeber and Dishion, 1983; Patterson and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1984; Loeber and Dishion, 1984; Patterson and Dishion, 1985; Patterson, 1986; Snyder and Patterson, 1987; Patterson, Dishion, and Bank, 1984; Larzelere and Patterson, 1990; Dishion, 1990; Dishion, Patterson, Stoolmiller, and Skinner, 1991).

Having established that parental supervision is a critical factor in the determination of delinquent behavior, one might question whether families in which both parents are employed can adequately and effectively supervise their children. Since the more traditional role for women has been to remain in the home and care for the children, this question is often posed in terms of mothers' employment.

Research does not evidence that families in which both parents work outside the home supervise their children less effectively. As early as the 1950's, studies by the Gluecks (1950) found that when a mother was able to arrange child care, her employment was unrelated to delinquency. Laub and Sampson's (1988) multivariate reanalysis of the Gluecks' data reconfirmed this conclusion. Nye (1958), after controlling for related factors such as socioeconomic status, mother's education, and broken home, found that a mother's employment appears unrelated

to delinquency. Hirschi (1969) observed a small difference in delinquency rates of children of employed mothers (20 percent) versus stay-at-home mothers (16 percent) that could not be accounted for by any other factors than mother's presence. But other researchers have found no relationship between a mother's employment and delinquency (Roy, 1963; Robins and Hill, 1966; Reige, 1972; Wadsworth, 1979; Pulkkinen, 1983; Farnworth, 1984; Wells and Rankin, 1988).

LeFlore (1988) compared delinquents with a matched sample of nondelinquents and did find a significant difference in terms of the mother's employment: for delinquents, 43 percent of their mothers were employed compared to 65 percent of the nondelinquents.

Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber (1986:42) concluded that, contrary to common opinion, if other factors affecting children, such as socioeconomic status or parent and child characteristics, are considered, the positive relationship between working mothers and delinquency disappears. Additional studies (Coser, 1982; Lotz et al., 1985) have shown that, in fact, the actual difference in time employed mothers and stay-at-home mothers spend caring for children is small (Wells and Rankin, 1988:267).

Steinberg's (1986) study of latchkey children helped clarify what happens to children after school when both parents work outside the home. His findings are consistent with the more general ideas about supervision that were presented in the preceding section. Steinberg observed, as Rodman et al. (1985) had earlier, that youth who stay home alone after school were no more susceptible to peer pressure to engage in antisocial activities than youth supervised by a parent, another adult, or an older sibling. However, as youth become further removed from adult supervision, their susceptibility to peer pressure grows. Youth who are home alone are less susceptible to peer pressure than those spending time at a friend's house; those spending time at a friend's house are less susceptible than those who are free to roam. Essentially, latchkey adolescents whose parents know their whereabouts are less susceptible to peer influence than those whose parents are unaware of their whereabouts. Furthermore, Steinberg discovered that adolescents who had been raised authoritatively, as outlined by Baumrind (1967 and 1971), are less likely to come under the negative influences of peers.

As youth become further removed from adult supervision, their susceptibility to peer pressure grows.

We probably know more about the relationship of supervision (monitoring and disciplining) and delinquency than perhaps any other area discussed so far.

- The quality of supervision is consistently and strongly related to delinquency.
- Parents must adequately monitor their children's behavior, whereabouts, and friends.
- They must reliably discipline their children for antisocial and prohibited behavior, but must do so neither rigidly nor severely.
- It helps if they assist their children in problem solving, negotiate conflict, and model prosocial behavior.

A belief in law appears to be negatively associated with delinquency.

Normative development

Less attention has been given to the issue of how children learn right from wrong, what some scholars call "normative development," and its relationship to delinquency than other developmental issues. Even when researchers have measured normative development, they have not seemed to know what to do with their findings, making only passing inferences before moving on to discuss attachment, supervision, and discipline. The existing literature on the topic includes a study by Mak (1990) that found that a belief in law was negatively associated with several measures of delinquency for both boys and girls. Mak further reported that feelings of empathy are inversely related to seriousness, vandalism, and assault for girls and cheating and assault for boys. Agnew (1985) found that a belief that it is good to be honest and to avoid cheating was associated with a reduced likelihood of delinquency.

Smith and Paternoster (1987) discovered that moral beliefs reduced the likelihood of marijuana use among both males and females, but more so for females. Paternoster and Triplett (1988) observed that moral beliefs were related to both the incidence and prevalence of marijuana use, theft, and vandalism (see also Paternoster, 1988). Another study found that attachment to church was inversely related to violence (Gardner and Shoemaker, 1989). And finally, Tolan (1988) and Tolan and Lorion (1988) found that the moral-religious emphasis within the family as measured by the Moos and Moos (1981) Family Environment Scale was related to self-reported delinquency.

Because some evidence has linked normative development, and specifically involvement with religion, with reduced likelihood of delinquency, it is curious that so few studies of this element of positive parenting have been conducted. Stark et al. (1980) suggested that the lack of attention to religious influences is due to two possibilities: (1) a lack of interest in conforming behavior, as opposed to deviant behavior, and (2) a general opposition to religious principles among academic social scientists. But even if this second assertion is true, why have researchers neglected a more secular focus on empathy and morality?

Morality, as explicated by Damon (1988), is evaluative as it involves distinguishing right and wrong; suggests an obligation toward standards of behavior; pertains to the welfare of others; includes a responsibility to act in a kind, caring, benevolent, and merciful way to others; incorporates respect for the rights of others; and entails a commitment to honesty. Surely, the recognition and embodiment of these elements relate to law-abiding behavior.

Several studies have demonstrated that empathy and altruistic behavior is evidenced among very young children (Rheingold and Emery, 1986; Zahn-Waxler and Radke-Yarrow, 1982; and Zahn-Waxler et al., 1988). Staub (1986:150) argues that considerable laboratory and socialization research has been produced that suggests three elements are necessary for empathy to develop: (1) parental affection and nurturance to develop trust and attachment, (2) induction to consider the consequences of one's behavior for others, and (3) monitoring and control to ensure compliance with expectations.

Empathy among offenders has been described by Gibbs (1987) as "superficial and erratic" and easily discarded when confronted with impulses of aggression or by self-centered desires. In contrast, Eisenberg and Miller (1987) found that children with strong empathetic capacities tended to engage less often in aggressive behavior.

Secure children may obey from their own desires rather than from fear of reprisal.

What role then does the family play in the development of morality? Damon (1988) argued that the role of parents in moral development is "critical and irreplaceable," explaining that the parents represent the child's first encounter with society's rules and regulations. Families, similar to societies, have rules against dishonesty, violence, theft, and a general prohibition against disorder. As the children confront the moral issues of life, their parents have considerable influence in helping the child reach a positive resolution with these dilemmas. Ainsworth et al. (1978) suggested that children seek and accept the parents' guidance, further maintaining that secure children obey voluntarily from their own desires rather than from fear of reprisal.

Arbuthnot, Gordon, and Jurkovic (1987:158), in an attempt to understand moral development and family relationships, suggested that dysfunctional families experiencing high levels of conflict, dominance, hostility, lack of warmth, and authoritarian disciplinary styles do not allow children to gain insight and understanding into how their misbehavior might cause hurt to others. Under these negative family conditions, children cannot develop conventional moral reasoning with roots in acceptance of mutual expectations, positive social intentions, belief in and maintenance of the social system, and acceptance of motives that include duties and respect. Based on their review of the literature, Arbuthnot and colleagues (p. 161) concluded that nearly all studies using moral assessment devices with acceptable psychometric properties have shown that delinquents tend to have lower moral reasoning maturity than nondelinquents.

They argue that delinquency can be anticipated when children or adolescents are unable to see the perspective of others and lack empathy for other people's circumstances. When conformity to rules of behavior for the sake of order in society is not accepted, when property is valued only in its possession, when personal relationships (even life itself) are valued only for their utility, then delinquent behavior should not be a surprise. Moral or normative development at a more advanced level may be necessary for young people to move beyond utility to moral justification for correct behavior. The young person must develop a sense of moral justification to have the ability and commitment to act accordingly when faced with temptation, economic deprivation, or intense peer-group pressure (Arbuthnot, Gordon, and Jurkovic, 1987:161).

Some researchers have looked to religion when exploring issues of normative and moral development. Stark's research on the relationship of religion and delinquency indicated that individual religiousness is not directly associated with delinquency, but that association with religious friends is related. Stark and his colleagues (1980:45) spoke of "moral communities," suggesting that the degree of relationship between religiousness and delinquency rises or falls

Delinquency is more likely when children are unable to distinguish right from wrong.

depending upon the extent to which high schools contain a majority of religious students.

Parsons and Mikawa (1991) studied incarcerated and nonincarcerated black men and found that those incarcerated had deviant friends and behavior at an early age while those not incarcerated participated in church activities and had friends associated with churches, perhaps buffering them from delinquent activity. Parsons and Mikawa pose the possibility that the incarcerated group may have become alienated from family values and attitudes at an early age. Members of the nonincarcerated group, who experienced strong family influences, may have been able to maintain those values when faced with the opposition of "hedonistic and materialistic values" and despite the pressure and domination of the white majority. The close family connection may also contribute to the nonincarcerated group's choice of a church-oriented lifestyle in continuing support of the family values (p. 172).

To summarize, less is known about the link between parental attention to normative and moral development and subsequent delinquency than many other topics of family life. However, research appears to indicate that:

- Delinquency is more likely when normative development is incomplete, and when children are unable to distinguish right from wrong, feel little or no obligation toward standards of behavior, and have little respect for rights and welfare of others.
- Parents play a critical role in moral development.

In order to more fully understand family relations, normative development, and delinquency,

- Researchers need to study the process and examine its relationship to supervision and discipline practices.
- They must examine the effect of family dysfunction—conflict, abuse, and rejection—on development of a sense of right and wrong.

Cumulative effects

A variety of family circumstances have been identified as contributing to the delinquent behavior of children. Children who are rejected by their parents, are inadequately supervised, and grow up in homes with considerable conflict are at greatest risk of becoming delinquents. The presence of any one of the family circumstances factors increases the chances of raising a delinquent child. The addition of more than one factor further enhances the odds of misbehavior. This notion of cumulative effect has been supported by reviews of several authors (Loeber and Stouthamer-Loeber, 1986; Minty, 1988; Kruttschmitt et al., 1987; Farrington et al., 1988; Farrington, 1990; Lytton, 1990; McCord, 1990b).

Looking now at the paths to delinquency, the literature seems to point to the conclusion that there are multiple paths. In examining the status offense of "running away," Huizinga et al. (1991:84–85) noted that some adolescents run away because of a bad situation in the home, some parents push their children out,

some teenagers leave for the thrill of it, and still others escape from over-protecting parents. No certain or direct pathway emerges for children growing up at risk. McCord (1980) found that the family backgrounds of property and violent offenders differed, which suggests that different paths lead to property and personal offenses.

Maternal affection can act as a buffer against delinquency.

Although the topic has received little attention at this point, recently, under a grant sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, David Huizinga and his colleagues (1991) have begun to explore the topic of paths to delinquency. They initially concluded that "multiple paths to delinquency do appear to exist" (p. 104).

Just as elements of the family situation converge to increase the probability of delinquency, other elements serve as buffers to delinquent behavior, even in the presence of high risk. McCord (1991b) found that competent mothers, identified as self-confident, consistently nonpunitive, affectionate, and having leadership skills, tend to protect children from criminogenic influences. Minty (1988) reported that the presence of one caring parent buffers children against the effect of parental rejection by the other parent. Rutter (1978) found that in homes with high marital discord, the presence of one parent who maintained a warm and positive relationship with the children buffered them from conduct disorders. Lytton (1990) argued that although children possess inherited predispositions toward conduct disorders, the circumstances within the family increase or decrease risk. Lytton claimed that maternal affection acts as a buffer, while an absence of monitoring by the parents increases the risk for development of conduct disorder.

Kruttschmitt et al. (1987), looking beyond the parent-child relationship and the family at other relationships, found that having a close sibling or being involved in teen sports provides social support that buffers abused children from becoming delinquent.

In two additional studies, McCord discovered that while the children of alcoholic fathers were more likely to become alcoholics, the chances of becoming alcoholic were diminished if their mothers did not demonstrate approval or respect for the alcoholic fathers (1988a). In the second study (1986), she identified three variables that appear to "insulate" a child from delinquency. She suggested that maternal affection, maternal self-confidence, and the father's esteem for the mother are critical features of an environment that buffers against delinquency.

Many teenagers commit delinquent acts. Most do not become seriously involved in a delinquent lifestyle. It is important to determine what distinguishes desistors from persisters.

Mulvey and LaRosa (1986) observed that by escaping a violent or disruptive home and moving to a more manageable, less chaotic, more controlled setting, delinquents were able to reform. Farrington et al. (1988) compared people with delinquent backgrounds, some of whom had successfully adjusted in adult life (characterized by having good employment, acceptable living accommodations, and positive relationships with spouses and children) with a second group of

A healthy home environment is the single most important factor in preventing delinquency.

people who had not successfully adjusted. He found several discernible differences. Delinquents without convicted parents, whose mothers expressed positive opinions of them during their childhood, and who did not spend their leisure time with their fathers were more successful in their adjustment to adult life.

Loeber et al. (1991) found influential factors in desistance varied with the age of the child. Across age groups, a good parent-child relationship had a positive association with subsequent desistance. During the middle to late adolescent years, the parents' enjoyment of their child, the child's compatibility with the parents, and strict discipline were related to desistance from delinquency. During the middle years, again, good communication about the child's activities and a negative attitude toward delinquency were important factors. At an earlier age, a two-parent family seemed to be significant.

In summary:

- There appears to be a cumulative effect such that the presence of more than one of these negative family attributes compounds the likelihood of delinquency.
- Not all children follow the same path to delinquency; different combinations of life experiences may produce delinquent behavior.
- Finally, positive parenting practices during the early years and later in adolescence appear to act as buffers, preventing delinquent behavior and assisting adolescents in desisting from further delinquent behavior.

Conclusions

What is necessary to keep children from becoming delinquent? Apparently, a healthy home environment is the single most important factor, an environment characterized by parents' affection, cohesion, and involvement in their children's lives. Children need the love, support, and acceptance that parents can provide. When these elements are missing, that is, when parents are harsh, unloving, overly critical, and authoritarian, healthy development is impeded and the child's risk of delinquency increases. Parental rejection appears to be the most powerful predictor of juvenile delinquency.

Research indicates that the problem of rejection lies not just with the parents. Some children are more difficult to manage; they may manifest impulsive, aggressive, and antisocial behaviors at an early age. To gain some peace in the home, parents may fail to interact with the child and may even come to dislike the child. Thus, rejection involves an interactive process involving maladaptive behavior of parents and children.

The second most important family life factor that places children at risk of delinquency is inadequate supervision. Children who are inadequately supervised by parents who fail to teach them right and wrong, who do not monitor their whereabouts, friends, or activities, and who discipline them erratically and harshly are more likely to become delinquent. When family conflict develops

over discipline and parents fail to follow through, delinquency is more likely to occur.

Problems with supervision afflict many special families. For example, parents who are themselves criminal generally do not encourage their children to break the law. In fact, these parents censure the delinquent activities of their children just as noncriminal parents do. Involvement in a criminal lifestyle or, for that matter, in drug and alcohol abuse disrupts the ability of parents to exercise consistent social control within the family. Criminal parents, therefore, less effectively supervise their children than noncriminal parents.

The same appears to be true for some single parents. There is nothing inherently pathological about single parenthood as a family form. However, it does predispose a situation in which there is less parental control. There may be less involvement with the children and less opportunity for supervision simply because there is only one parent. Consequently, the child may be more susceptible to peer influence.

Supervision has been shown to be a significant issue in the lives of latchkey children. Children who stay home alone after school are no more likely to engage in misbehavior than children supervised by a parent or another adult. However, as a latchkey child becomes further removed from supervision—staying at a friend's house, or, worse yet, free to roam—the risks of misbehavior increase.

Evidence suggests that children need to be taught to understand the effect of their behavior on others, to feel empathy and compassion, and to be able to distinguish right from wrong. They must be led to appreciate the rights of others and to act in a caring way toward people. Parents play a critically important role in this process of moral development. Delinquency is more likely when moral beliefs are inadequately developed.

Children who grow up in homes with considerable conflict, marital discord, and, perhaps, even violence are also at greater risks of becoming delinquent. This third familial attribute, while positively related to delinquency, is not as strong as rejection or supervision in predicting subsequent trouble.

The weaker relationship is logical. Rejection and supervision directly influence the child's self-perception and behavior, whereas the effect of family conflict is less direct. A child may learn aggressive behavior from observing his or her parents' fights but might also develop an avoidance of such behavior after observing its effects. It is important to keep in mind that many children in the United States personally experience marital discord, yet most do not become delinquent.

From a policy perspective, it is also important to recognize the observation that marital discord is a more powerful predictor of delinquency than divorce or single-parent family structure. Family relations, not just the separation, influence delinquency.

Abuse directly affects the child, yet the link between abuse and delinquency is not as strong as the link between rejection and delinquency. Abused children

Marital discord is a more powerful predictor of delinquency than a single-parent family.

Abuse is not as strongly linked to delinquency as is rejection.

tend to manifest more problematic and aggressive behavior than children who are not abused, but some abused children withdraw, become self-destructive, or focus their reaction inward. Other children show few behavioral effects of abuse. Being abused increases the chances of delinquency, but most abused children do not become delinquent.

Adult crime

This section of the report describes the literature and research examining the association of adult family relations and criminality. We seek a better understanding of how family ties buffer adults from criminal involvement or aid individuals in desisting from further criminality. Our approach is still oriented toward policymaking. We evaluate research findings in light of their potential to help design public policy to reduce crime. We outline what is known and unknown about the association between adult family life and criminality.

This attempt to provide policymakers and practitioners with information and advice about adult family life and criminality is hampered by two significant problems. First, there is a lack of studies. Much of the criminological literature accepts as a given the perspective that constancy and stability characterize and direct the life course. The experiences of early childhood are assumed to have a lasting effect on adult personality and behavior. The idea that adult experiences significantly influence the propensity toward criminal behavior among adults has received considerably less attention than family experiences during early childhood.

Second, the few studies that have examined the family situation of adult criminals are quite diverse. Some studies have simply assessed the association of marital status and criminality; others explore the adjustment outcomes of married versus unmarried released prisoners. Other research has examined the ecological impact of single-parent families on crime rates within a community. The breadth of perspective combined with the relatively small number of studies makes it difficult to detect any consistent themes in the findings and to draw overall conclusions regarding what we know about the influence of family on the incidence of adult criminality.

Family disruption and community crime rates

Research indicates that neighborhoods with higher percentages of single-parent families have higher rates of delinquency. If divorce and family breakups serve as indicators for overall disorganization and alienation within communities, and if disorganization and alienation are related to how much crime a community experiences, then adult criminality should also be higher in areas with high proportions of single-parent families.

Reiss (1986:15) suggested that deviance and criminality occur when primary controls fail to inhibit deviant conduct and formal controls are unsuccessful in inducing conformity. Families serve as primary and developmental control institutions, and their impact may be weakened by cross-generational conflict

and broken family structure. Relatively high levels of crime are observed in neighborhoods with high concentrations of mother-only households with dependent children. Many single mothers must work outside the home and leave adolescents largely unsupervised; consequently, the children are more likely to come under the influence of deviant peers. These same neighborhoods also tend to have more single persons, particularly high-risk males. Such neighborhoods suffer migration of families and businesses that might exert a stabilizing force. As informal controls are attenuated and crime increases, residents become fearful and more reluctant to venture into the community, maintain surveillance of one another's property, question strangers, admonish children and adults for their misconduct, and intervene when misconduct and victimization are observed. Consequently, neighborhoods with high concentrations of mother-only households tend to experience higher rates of delinquency and adult crime. (See Stark, 1987, for an elaboration of the neighborhood ecological model.)

Neighborhoods with high rates of single-parent households experience higher rates of delinquency.

Kornhauser (1978) suggested that communities with high levels of mother-only homes have low rates of participation in formal voluntary organizations, local politics, the YMCA, library membership, and school activities (Sampson, 1986a:277). Simcha-Fagan and Schwartz's (1986) research in 12 New York City neighborhoods supported this position. A community's level of organizational participation directly and indirectly affects both individual delinquency and criminality. Formal organizations help integrate people into the larger community and thus form social bonds that intervene against criminal acts. Blau and Blau (1982) argued that marital disruption (i.e., divorce and separation) serves as an overall indicator of instability, conflict, and disorganization in adult relationships and may have potentially important effects on adult criminality.

The Israeli kibbutz served Felson (1986) as an example of a place where crime rates are low. Such a close community, where people know each other and are aware of property ownership and family linkage, offers less opportunity for exploitive crime by those who may be inclined to commit criminal acts.

Today, American families are more dispersed geographically, smaller, and more likely to be headed by a single parent. Such changes in family structure and functioning in recent decades have further restricted the potential for the community to apply informal social control and have contributed to increases in crime rates. Under this scenario, crime can increase even when the social bonds and the motivation for offenders remain the same. All that is necessary is for the patterns of daily life to change in such a way as to increase the opportunity in place and time for criminal acts to occur, as well as to obstruct the structures that guard against them (Felson, 1986:125).

Sampson (1986a, 1986b, 1987a, 1987b) approached crime causation in general from the ecological framework originating with the seminal studies of Shaw and McKay at the University of Chicago in the 1920's and 1930's (Shaw and McKay, 1942; see Byrne and Sampson, 1986). This framework, when applied to explanations of crime and delinquency, is distinguished by its goal not to explain individual involvement in criminal behavior, but to isolate characteristics of communities, cities, or societies that lead to high rates of criminality (Sampson, 1986a:272). Within this overall macro-level viewpoint, family structure plays an important role.

Divorce creates a pool of unattached males who are less restricted by social controls.

Sampson first developed the proposition that communities with a high proportion of single-parent families (defined as the proportion of those ever married who are divorced or separated, proportion of total households that are female headed, and proportion of primary individual households) have higher crime rates. He found that the proportion of primary individual (one-person) households was positively related to the rate of theft and assault (1986b) and robbery and homicide (1986a), even when ruling out racial, economic, and family disruption factors. He indicated that these results support the idea that family structure is important in relation to social control of offenders and also to the vulnerability and guardianship factors that offer opportunities for offenders to commit criminal acts.

Because serious crime is largely a male phenomenon, it may be possible that divorce creates a larger pool of unattached males who are less restricted by social controls introduced by a married lifestyle. Consequently, marital and family disruption may be relevant to adult criminality as well as juvenile delinquency (Sampson, 1986b:28).

Because crime and mother-only families are more prevalent in black underclass communities (areas where unemployed, underskilled, and poorly educated individuals face limited opportunities for economic or social mobility), important questions arise about the interrelatedness of race, labor-market participation, economic dislocation, family dissolution, and criminality. Some theorists have approached the race-crime issue from the "culture-of-poverty" perspective, implying that inherent differences in black culture result in a higher degree of acceptability of crime (Wolfgang and Ferracuti, 1967, Curtis, 1975, cited in Sampson, 1987b:349).

In counterargument, Sampson (1987a) extended the work of Wilson (1987) to argue against the culture-of-poverty thesis that violent criminal acts express subcultural values condoning and legitimatizing violence (Curtis, 1975, cited in Sampson, 1987a:349) and asserted that there is nothing inherent in black culture that is conducive to crime (1987a:348). Instead, Sampson found that as the proportion of unemployed black men increases in a community, so does the proportion of households headed by females. In turn, the proportion of families headed by black women is associated with higher rates of black murder and robbery, especially by juveniles. Sampson concluded that "persistently high rates of black crime appear to stem from the structural linkages among unemployment, economic deprivation, and family disruption in urban black communities" (p. 348).

Conservative analysts (Gilder, 1981; Murray, 1984; Davidson, 1990) have argued that extended welfare benefits in concert with greater economic opportunities for women have increased marital disruptions and resulted in greater irresponsibility among men regarding their family obligations. McLanahan and Booth (1989:571) noted that welfare benefits seem to account for a small proportion of the increase in mother-only families.

Another major problem in establishing the link between mother-only families in poor neighborhoods and crime is the fact that less than 1 percent of white mother-only families live in poverty. Consequently, most white children who

live in mother-only families do not grow up with the social influences of the underclass neighborhood. According to mainstream feminists (Bergmann, 1986; Hartmann, 1985), the increased demand for women in the workforce and the associated higher wages available to women have enabled them to support themselves and their children outside of marriage. Consequently, women marry less frequently, are more likely to divorce, and are more inclined to form single-parent families (McLanahan and Booth, 1989:569–570). However, as McLanahan and Booth pointed out, middle-class white women have been the predominant recipients of increased economic independence and it is unlikely that poor minority women have gained economically or socially from this increased independence (p. 570).

Middle-class white women have been the prime beneficiaries of greater economic independence.

To summarize:

- Rates of delinquency and crime increase as the proportion of mother-only households with dependent children increases across neighborhoods.
- This relationship may be causal (e.g., single mothers are less able to socialize their children) or may simply be spurious (e.g., neighborhoods with more single-mother households may also have more single, unattached, high-risk males). In all likelihood, both possibilities—the inability to socialize and the greater number of high-risk males—play a role in determining the amount of crime a community experiences, but analysts do not fully understand the relationship.

It is important for the reader to maintain the perspective that family structure is only one attribute of urban neighborhoods with high crime. Poverty, density, transience, mixed use, and dilapidation also characterize these localities. Individuals and groups react to the material conditions of the neighborhood. Moral cynicism, opportunities and motivations for deviance, and reduced social control are common reactions to the conditions of underclass neighborhoods. Processes within the neighborhood amplify the criminogenic forces at work by attracting crime-prone individuals, driving out stabilizing groups, and further attenuating social control (Stark, 1987:895).

Given this, it would be rash to single out mother-only families as a predominant causal force in crime. Much about the interaction of all these factors remains unknown.

Many factors help families withstand strong criminogenic forces at work in poor neighborhoods, and the question remains what factors allow them to avoid criminality despite high-risk circumstances.

Marriage and family

Family processes and parental practices affect whether children and adolescents will become delinquent. Does it follow that adult family life is associated with a reduced likelihood of adult criminal behavior? Being married and having children would seem to deter someone from becoming criminal.

Rowe, Lindquist, and White (1989), in a survey of 1,993 adult males and females, found that people are more concerned about losing their family's respect

Research shows conflicting evidence on marital status and adult crime.

than with being arrested or even imprisoned. Practically all respondents (91 percent) said that they would be very upset if they lost respect within their family. Rowe and his colleagues concluded that these findings point to a strong effect of the bonding process within the family in preventing adult criminal behavior.

Gottfredson and Hirschi (1990) disagree with this perspective. They characterized adult criminals as having low self-control and exhibiting a tendency to pursue short-term, immediate pleasures. Those behavior characteristics are compatible with a criminal, but not a family, lifestyle. Consequently, they said that criminals abandon relationships with wives (husbands), homes, and children when those ties become restrictive or inconvenient. Any association observed between family life and criminality will, therefore, be spurious; they are related only in their mutual association with low self-control.

To examine whether family relations buffer adults from participation in criminal activities, researchers have conducted individual-level analyses to compare the crime rates of people with spouses and children to the rates of individuals who were single, childless, or both. Some of this research was cross-sectional (i.e., the researcher selects two comparable groups that differ only in family status and compares their crime rates while controlling for other significant influences). Other studies employ longitudinal designs (i.e., they select groups of people and track them over a portion of the life course). Over a long period of time, some individuals will marry and have children; others will not. Some subjects will commit crimes; others will not. Longitudinal researchers have attempted to link the two phenomena of marriage and criminality.

Knight, Osborn, and West (1977) examined the relationship of early marriage and criminal tendencies in an attempt to learn more about the association of marital status and adult crime. Their findings did not support the notion that early marriage produced a significant reduction in subsequent criminality. In fact, those marrying before age 21 were significantly more likely to have a conviction record. Additionally, fatherhood produced no reduction in criminal behavior. However, delinquent fathers whose wives were free of convictions sustained fewer convictions after marriage than similar fathers who married women displaying delinquent behavior as well (p. 359). While marriage did not appear to reduce the likelihood of further criminal or delinquent behavior, it did have a reducing effect on some of the habits commonly associated with delinquency, such as drinking, sexual promiscuity, and drug use.

Rowe and Tittle (1977) suggested that criminal tendencies may decrease with age because as people mature they become more integrated into the organized social life of the culture. The researchers included marital status as an element of social integration. Tests of the hypothesis found that the relationship of age and assault was dependent on social integration, but the effect did not hold for other crimes—theft, gambling, and tax cheating. Furthermore, the effect of social integration is mitigating only for those subjects who have delinquent acquaintances while young (p. 230). The authors concluded that social integration may have limited usefulness. From this, we can infer that marital status is probably not strongly related to criminality.

In studying the effect of dropping out of school on subsequent delinquent and criminal behavior, Thornberry, Moore, and Christenson (1985) included a measure of marital status in their assessment of postschool experience. They found that dropout and unemployment status were related to arrest but that marital status was not.

These few cross-sectional studies appear to support Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990:140–141) position that marriage and family do not influence the likelihood of crime among adults. Gottfredson and Hirschi argued that individual differences in the likelihood of committing crimes persist over time and that transitional points do not drastically reshuffle proclivities toward criminal behavior. Yes, criminality declines with age but not because of situational changes. Gottfredson and Hirschi argued that the decline simply reflects an aspect of the aging process.

The lack of attention to the topic is surprising. No comprehensive and specific study of marriage and family and their relationship to criminality exists. No one has examined marriage beyond a determination of whether an individual is married to see if the quality of a relationship might be related to outcome. Consequently, we are reluctant to accept unequivocally Gottfredson and Hirschi's conclusion based upon these few cross-sectional studies.

Daly's (1989) findings provide an interesting twist to our consideration of the association of adult family life and criminality. According to Daly, not all criminals are detected; of those detected, not all are arrested; and of those arrested, not all are convicted or punished. Much of the variance in selection is random; however, some is systematic and related to socioeconomic status, race, and gender. Generally, many observers believe that women are treated more leniently than men by the criminal justice system. However, Daly found that children—not women—are the primary objects of judicial protection. Judges treat parents more leniently than nonparents. For both female and male defendants, economic support and care for families was the primary consideration. However, within this framework, judges appear to maintain a hierarchy in that they perceive care giving to be more important than wage earning for the maintenance of families. Daly claimed that this belief often causes leniency toward women as they are most often regarded as the primary caregivers, while men are seen as the primary wage earners. Interestingly, the mitigating effect of family responsibilities was greatest for black women (when compared to whites and Hispanics) and least for black men.

A few important longitudinal studies hypothesize that the social bonds to adult institutions, including the family, determine criminal behavior over the life course. West (1982) outlined the transitional effect of marriage, stating that "Getting married is an indisputably crucial event which may be expected to have an effect upon lifestyle and delinquent habits" (p. 100). However, West found that self-reported crime among the unmarried men differed only sightly and insignificantly from the married men. Both married and unmarried men reported a decline in their involvement in criminal behavior with age, but the married men were no less criminal than the unmarried. West did observe that criminals were more likely to marry criminal wives than were noncriminals. He

Judges treat parents more leniently than nonparents.

The ability to sustain marriage may predict abstinence from crime.

speculated that the restraining effect of marriage would be nullified for those individuals who married criminal wives. This supposition led him to conclude, "the explanation that makes most sense of our findings is that marriage sometimes has a restraining effect upon delinquents, but less often than might be expected because of the tendency of delinquents to marry females who are themselves socially delinquent" (p. 104). Marriage in this case is simply another element in a delinquent lifestyle, along with erratic employment, criminal peers, and heavy drinking.

Shavit and Rattner (1988), in a longitudinal study of an Israeli male birth cohort, found that the age variation in criminal activity (peaking in the mid- to late teens and declining thereafter) could not be accounted for by employment, schooling, or marital status. This finding is consistent with the results of the cross-sectional studies that suggest that patterns of criminality are not modified by situational events in the life course. Interestingly, Shavit and Rattner found marital status to be positively related to criminality; that is, married men were more likely to be criminal. They suggested that this may simply indicate that delinquents marry younger. These findings clearly indicate the difficulty in examining marriage per se without knowing anything about the criminality of the spouse or the quality of the marriage.

Farrington (1989) examined how men within a longitudinal cohort who had no convictions after age 21 differed from men who persisted in convictions up to age 32. He found that more than three-quarters of the sample were living with either their wives or a female companion and that convicted and unconvicted men did not differ in the proportion living with a woman (p. 229). However, about twice as many of the convicted as unconvicted men had been divorced or separated from a wife by age 32. Many had been separated from their children. Convicted men were much more likely not to get along well with their wives or companions, and were significantly more likely to have struck their wives or companions than unconvicted men. Farrington's findings suggest that marriage, per se, does not intervene in a criminal lifestyle, but that the ability to sustain marriage predicts abstinence from crime.

Caspi, Bem, and Elder's (1989) findings about continuity of childhood ill-temperedness into adulthood help to clarify the relationship of adult family life and criminality. Their 30-year longitudinal study discovered that boys who were ill-tempered became "uncontrolled, irritable, and moody" (p. 400) men. In comparison with other men, these men were more likely to experience employment problems and divorce. Ill-tempered girls married men with employment problems, were also more likely to divorce, and were described as ill-tempered mothers. Examinations of marriage alone tell little about the extent of an individual's social integration or the psychological transition to a noncriminal lifestyle. The fact that people may be predisposed, given their personalities, to conflictive marriages tells us that the relationship of family life and criminality is more complex than a simple bivariate relationship.

Sampson and Laub's (1990) recent reanalysis of the Gluecks' classic longitudinal study of delinquency began to elucidate how marriage might affect propensity toward criminality. Rather than using marital status, Sampson and Laub

created a composite measure of attachment to spouse from interview data about the quality of the relationship and attitudes about marital responsibility and family cohesion. Analyses revealed that attachment to one's spouse in young adulthood was associated with a significant and substantial reduction in adult antisocial behavior, irrespective of childhood delinquency. The researchers concluded that "social bonds to adult institutions exert a powerful influence on adult crime and deviance" (p. 618).

To summarize:

- Some of the studies reviewed appear to support Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) claim that marriage and family have little influence on criminal propensity, and that such tendencies are evidenced early in life and persist. West's finding that delinquents tend to marry delinquents is consistent with Gottfredson and Hirschi's belief that offenders adapt their marriages to be consistent with their chaotic and criminal lifestyles (p. 141).
- In contrast, Sampson and Laub's (1990) research seems to suggest that the social bonding that occurs within a marriage acts as a barrier to criminal involvement.

At this point, it is unclear which position is valid.

Researchers conclude that bonds to social institutions exert a powerful influence on crime and deviance.

Convicted criminals and their families

If family relations help buffer individuals from criminal activities, might they assist criminals in desisting from criminal lifestyles?

Perhaps the greatest number of studies that examine the association of adult family life and criminality have come out of the corrections field where researchers have explored whether family ties assist prisoners in adjusting to prison and successfully returning to the community. Corrections researchers have examined family relations in three different contexts: (1) risk analysis, (2) prisoners and their families, and (3) postrelease adjustment.

Risk assessment

Unlike other research efforts discussed in this report, the purpose of risk assessment is not theoretical explanation, but prediction. Researchers attempt to identify individual characteristics and experiences that predict behavioral outcomes and use a variety of statistical methods to analyze that information to predict the probability of offense or recidivism. Risk-prediction instruments have been used to make decisions about selective incapacitation, placement in appropriate institutional custody settings, and levels of supervision within the community (Ashford and LeCroy, 1990:441).

In developing risk assessment instruments, several researchers have included indicators of family situation or functioning. In a classic study, Gottfredson, Wilkins, and Hoffman (1978) proposed a procedure for the development of risk assessment instruments. They included "living arrangement after release" in their own parole outcome prediction instrument. Following the lead of Gottfredson et al., the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) sought to develop

When incarceration removes a violent parent from the home, it may have a beneficial effect on the rest of the family.

an instrument to predict probation failure that could be used throughout the Nation (Baird, 1979). Once again, living arrangement was included in the model. Wright, Clear, and Dickson (1984) found that while the NIC instrument itself did not predict probation failure from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, living situation remained a stable predictor of probation outcome.

In developing risk prediction instruments for prison adjustment problems, Wright (1988) found marital status to be related to some, but not all, institutional problems. Marital status predicted who would be charged with a disciplinary infraction; however, reporting to sick call, a proxy for stress, was unrelated to marital status. Marital status related to self-reported anxiety, but not to problems with interpersonal relations or victimization and injury.

Using sophisticated statistical methods to predict criminal recidivism among a sample of North Carolina prison releasees, Schmidt and Witte (1989) found that marital status at time of entry into prison was individually insignificant in predicting time until return to prison. In prior research, Schmidt and Witte (1984) found that marital status at time of release was not related to seriousness of the recidivism offense but was related to type of offense. Marriage decreased the probability of committing a property offense. For some samples and some types of offenders, marital status was associated with shorter sentences and shorter time served.

Prisoners and their families

Incarceration may place the entire family in crisis. Families may experience anxiety, uncertainty, and a sense of loss. The family may suffer financial loss, the children may lose a parent, and the full burden of family responsibility may shift to the remaining parent or other family members. However, this need not be the case. Sometimes, incarceration removes a violent parent from the home and may actually have a beneficial effect on the rest of the family. In other cases, incarceration of a predominantly absent parent may have little effect on remaining members of the family.

Maintaining and strengthening family ties of incarcerated individuals may be related to positive adjustment to incarceration. Programs that support, encourage, and facilitate family visitation may be important for the incarcerated individual and for his or her children. Several researchers have implied that maintaining and strengthening family ties among inmates and their family members is helpful in facilitating good institutional behavior (Bauhofer, 1985; Burstein, 1977; Davis, 1985; Howser, Grossman, and MacDonald, 1983, in Lanier, 1991).

In a study of the reasons formerly incarcerated property offenders ceased their criminal activities, Shover (1983:212) reported that the former offenders grew disenchanted with the criminal lifestyle of their youth. The subjects indicated that they experienced a desire for a fundamental change in their lives. Over 25 percent of the subjects maintained that the establishment of a mutually satisfying relationship with a woman was critical to this process. These individuals maintained that the relationships they had during their youth had less influence on their behavior. With age, new relationships took on added meaning and im-

portance. In other words, the offenders became more socially integrated. This finding contradicts the position that transitional events do not influence people's behavior.

Fishman's (1986) interviews with the wives of prisoners recently released on parole indicated the reciprocal nature of family life and criminality. Wives reported that marital problems and conflict started when the men began drifting back toward their preprison lifestyles of "hard living" and crime. This pattern included financial irresponsibility, heavy alcohol and drug abuse, physical assaults, and criminal activity. It was this point of departure from conventional practices that precipitated marital conflict rather than the reverse. Marital problems could, in turn, produce further criminal activity among some husbands.

Fishman (1986) found that when husbands obtained employment and were willing to be highly committed to a conventional lifestyle, the family was able to settle into a harmonious pattern. In these cases, wives were able to support husbands' conformist aspirations.

A number of articles have indicated that strong inmate-family relationships are beneficial and could be strengthened through family therapy for prisoners (see Holt and Miller, 1972; Brodsky, 1975; Peck and Edwards, 1977; Nash, 1981; Swan, 1981). Kaslow (1987) proposed a model of therapy that may lead to a more prosocial postrelease lifestyle. Cobean and Power (1978) claimed that strong family functioning during incarceration enhances inmates' rehabilitation.

VanDeusen, Yarbrough, and Cornelesen (1985) agreed that familial factors influence criminal behavior. They proposed an approach to therapy that assesses the relevance of physical, psychological, social, and cultural factors for treatment. Goodwin and Elson (1987) concurred that inmate services should be expanded to include the whole family (Bray, 1980; Cook and Ferritor, 1985; Kneipp and Bender, 1981; Power and Dell Orto, 1980). What is surprising from the literature is that researchers have failed to evaluate rigorously whether family therapy reduces the likelihood of criminal recidivism. One finds evidence that family therapy is successful for juveniles, but high-quality studies of programs aimed at adult offenders and their families do not exist.

Inmate services should be expanded to include the whole family.

Postrelease adjustment

Ohlin (1954) conducted one of the earliest attempts to substantiate the connection between family ties and postrelease success. He developed an "index of family interest" to study the belief of many parole agents that parolees with close family ties did better on parole than those without such ties. Ohlin, using this instrument with a sample of releasees from 1925 to 1935, found that 75 percent of those classified as maintaining "active family interest" while in prison were successful on parole. Only 34 percent of those considered loners had success on parole (in Homer, 1979:48). Lending further support to Ohlin's findings, Glaser in 1956 found 70 percent of the "active family interest" group to be successful on parole, compared with 50 percent of those with "no contact with relatives" (Glaser, 1964).

Receipt of TARP payments are stabilizing for married men only.

Fishman (1986:47) suggested that families can act as a buffer from the immediate problems of reentry by providing parolees with economic, material, and social support. According to Irwin (1970:129), the family is most helpful in providing, even temporarily, food and a place to live. The family may help the parolee find work and often provides for such immediate needs as clothing, toilet articles, and transportation, while helping the person address more subtle needs of resocialization, such as payment of bills, meeting even small obligations, and scheduling time.

Irwin (1970:30) reported that the characteristics, quality, and history of the family relationships are of ultimate importance. Families can operate in a negative as well as positive way for parolees. For example, conflict within the family, differences in levels of commitment, and the total character of the family's history all have important bearing on the way the parolee will reintegrate in the free world. Families with positive past histories find reintegration of the parolee into the family constellation distressful; when their past is filled with conflict and difficulty, reintegration will be even more problematic, if not impossible.

Other researchers have explored the connection between maintenance of family and community ties during imprisonment and postrelease success. Holt and Miller (1972) in a postrelease followup study found that 2 percent of the parolees who had three or more different visitors during the year prior to parole returned to prison, whereas 12 percent of those who had no contact with family or friends returned to prison within a year. Leclair (1978) compared the recidivism of those participating in a furlough program, in which participants had the opportunity to reestablish and strengthen family ties before release from prison, with the rates of nonparticipants. Furlough participants had a recidivism rate of 16 percent, compared to 27 percent for those released without the furlough program. Howser and MacDonald (1982) found that participation in a private family visiting program while incarcerated was related to postrelease success (Hairston, 1988).

Research about the Transitional Aid Research Project (TARP) offers additional insight about reentry and family relations. The TARP project was initiated in 1976 and provided released men money for 13 or 26 weeks in hopes of improving their successful readjustment to the community. Contrary to what researchers expected, recipients of TARP payments were not less likely to be rearrested or to find employment. TARP payments were, in addition, found to be negatively associated with financial support in the home and, as reported by the significant women in the lives of the men, did not improve hope or morale for the women. However, men returning to their wives, in contrast to men returning to mothers or girlfriends, were found to benefit from payments. They found jobs more quickly. Husbands receiving aid were more likely to reside in the home. These findings indicate that the payments provided a stabilizing resource for married men only (Curtis and Schulman, 1984).

To summarize the research on convicted criminals and their families,

- Marital status, as a variable, has not proved to be a consistent predictor of prison adjustment or postrelease recidivism.

- Family relations can act as a social support for the offender and aid in his or her reentry, but can also operate as a negative influence when there is conflict or difficult relations.
- The relationship between marriage and successful reentry may be reciprocal. As the convicted individual begins to drift back to a criminal lifestyle, marital problems are likely to increase.

Criminal lifestyles favor immediate gratification over self-sacrifice.

Conclusions

Neighborhoods with more single-mother families tend to experience higher rates of both delinquency and adult criminality. These same communities also have more poverty, density, transience, mixed use, and dilapidation. Moral cynicism, opportunities and motivations for deviance, and reduced social control are also common. Family structure is probably not the cause of greater criminality but simply an endemic characteristic of such troubled communities.

Whether marriage and family life reduce the likelihood of criminal behavior among adults remains unclear. For law-abiding people, family respect surely influences their choice of behaviors. However, for individuals inclined toward criminal lifestyles, short-term, immediate pleasures may win out over the self-sacrifice required of family life.

A major problem is that the distinction between being married or not tells us little about the nature of the relationship or the degree to which the individual has undertaken a nondeviant lifestyle. A marriage can be conflictive or violent. A married person can spend little time in the relationship and can be socially, emotionally, and economically irresponsible to the relationship. The partner in a marriage can encourage conformity but, alternatively, may also be criminal and may support the spouse's criminality.

Some research suggests that male criminals, in comparison to noncriminals, are more likely to marry younger, often marry already pregnant women, and are more likely to marry criminal women. Other research finds that criminals, while no less likely to be married or in a significant relationship than noncriminals, were more likely to divorce or separate, to not get along well with their spouses, and to be involved in violent marital relationships. These results suggest that marriage and family life do not serve as transitional points; rather offenders appear to be attracted to more deviant relationships and spouses just as they are to deviant behaviors. The marriage itself, then, is just another indicator of a socially irresponsible lifestyle along with erratic employment, delinquent peers, heavy drinking, and drug use.

In contrast to these studies, research that examined the quality of the marital relationship observed an association with criminality. Attachment to spouse was found to be associated with a decrease in the likelihood of adult criminality. Among convicted criminals, maintaining an active family interest while incarcerated and the establishment of a mutually satisfying relationship after release were associated with decreases in subsequent reoffense. These findings suggest that adults may reach transitional points in their lives and that family life may alter an established trajectory.

A good marriage may help keep an ex-offender crime-free.

What remains unclear in the research literature is whether marriage and family assist offenders and high-risk individuals in making a transition to a more conventional lifestyle or whether with age, offenders make the shift to a conventional lifestyle and appreciate more the value of family life. The only study that examines the relationship in any detail seems to suggest that the relationship may be reciprocal. A good marital relationship may help an ex-offender remain crime-free; however, an individual's drift back into a deviant and irresponsible lifestyle creates distress within the marriage and will reduce any support for a noncriminal lifestyle that may have been available.

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